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# **THE QUEEN'S POISONER.**

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**VOL. I.**

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THE  
QUEEN'S POISONER;

OR,

FRANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

A ROMANCE.

BY LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

AUTHOR OF "A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES,"  
"SPECIMENS OF THE EARLY POETRY OF FRANCE," ETC.

Good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
Dying ere they sicken.

*Macbeth.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,  

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1841.



**LONDON :**  
**PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,**  
**Bangor House, Shoe Lane.**

## INTRODUCTION.

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IN the following pages the minute details of the historians of the period have been carefully attended to, and so circumstantial are they that little is left to the imagination of the narrator.

None of the characters of the story are altogether fictitious, and most of them are described from pictures drawn by contemporary writers.

Etoile, Henri Etienne, Pasquier, and others have placed the courts of Charles the Ninth and Henry the Third, with all the particulars of every event of moment, so vividly before the mind, that their readers cannot fail to become

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intimately acquainted with the personages and circumstances they name.

The character of Marguerite de Navarre has been severely judged by some historians; but the high estimation in which she was held by others, and her known acts of benevolence and mercy, entitle her to lenity, if not to admiration. When the violent prejudices of party are considered, there may be as good reason to paint her amiable as guilty, and she should at least be allowed the benefit of doubt, as well as her unfortunate sister-in-law, Mary Stuart.

Some documents, such as the letters to and from the Rochellois, those of Catherine and Condé, the Sermon on the Massacre, &c. have been introduced as curious and interesting in themselves, and probably little known to the general English reader.

The incidents are furnished by the chroniclers of the day; and, however extraordinary the accounts of the fête at the Hôtel d'Hercule, the unfeminine conduct of La Chateaufort, and

some other traits may appear, they are not fictitious. The sieges of La Rochelle and Domfront are not less real, and the escapes on the night of St. Bartholomew are only more dramatic and fearful in fact than the romance presents them.

Of Bianco and his mistress scarcely anything has been invented: their spells, talismans,

“ Treasons, murders, desolations,”

are upon record. It would occupy several volumes if all the crimes attributed to Catherine in the “*Discours Merveilleux*,” and other publications, were detailed.

The valuable work of Dulaure has contributed not a little to verify the descriptions of the city of Paris as it then existed; that of M. Dreux du Radier has also been found useful in affording much information respecting the female characters of note introduced, and the charming “*Mémoires de la Reine Marguerite*” have furnished costume and manners.

To the liberality of a kind friend, whose library has been open to the author, she is indebted for the facilities which have rendered the compilation of this historical romance an occupation of pleasure; and to that friend the work is affectionately inscribed.

London, April, 1841.

# THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LA PAIX BOITEUSE.

Gone to be married—gone to swear a peace!

SHAKESPEARE.

FULL, bright and sparkling in the brilliant sun of early June, the waters of the Loire rolled majestically along beneath the high-arched bridge of Blois, on which stood an almost countless multitude of people, gazing with eager curiosity, evidently in expectation of some interesting spectacle. The river was covered with gaily-ornamented barges, filled with eager spectators. The royal banner of France waved from the highest tower of the castle; and from the heights, where rose the spires of the cathedral and the palace of the bishop, streamed in the breeze gay pennons, emblazoned with the arms of the church and of the town. The broad quays, shaded with enormous trees, were swarming with people, who pressed and crushed

their neighbours in their endeavours to obtain the most advantageous position from whence to view the spectacle, for which they had waited for hours in patient anticipation. It appeared that some event of absorbing interest was about to take place, and the same eager curiosity seemed to animate every individual in that immense mass of human beings. From the river-side to the embattled hills above, the antique streets of Blois rise almost precipitously: many of them are cut in steps to afford an easier ascent to foot-passengers, no horse, nor vehicle of any kind, being able to attempt to mount the stony way, which seems a part of the rock; from distance to distance, where a turn of the street afforded a glimpse of the town and river below, every roof and window was crowded with heads, thrust forward with anxious desire to behold what all sought.

It was easy to detect that the havoc of recent war had left its traces on many of the houses and walls; but the greatest care had been taken to conceal any such appearances by gorgeous draperies of tapestry hung in all directions. Where breaches still remained unrepaired, temporary scaffolding had been erected for musicians, gaily and fantastically attired, whose loud instruments joined the swelling echoes of the

trumpets, which at intervals announced the nearer approach of welcome and honoured guests to the royal party, who awaited with the same anxiety as the populace the last peal of cannon from the ramparts, proclaiming that the young King of Navarre, and his illustrious mother, had entered the gates of Blois, attended by King Charles the Ninth in person, and a gallant train of nobles, all vying with each other in attentions to their long-sought visitors.

Greeted by the admiring shouts of the excited multitude, the royal cavalcade wound slowly up the steep hill which conducts to the castle: fresh peals of artillery announced their arrival before its gates, and fresh bursts of music heralded their entrance through the venerable arch, which leads to the court of Stephen.

They reached the foot of the beautiful winding staircase, whose carved ornaments glittered like alabaster in the dancing sunbeams, and through every loophole of whose elegantly wreathed and twisted tower looked forth richly-dressed ladies of the court and cavaliers in splendid costumes, studding the whole surface at rising distances, till, at the dome-shaped summit, groups appeared, waving scarfs and flags, embroidered with glittering devices in honour of the day. Here King Charles alighted



from his richly adorned charger, and his example was followed by all his courtiers, who approached the Queen of Navarre and her son and daughter, and assisted them to dismount.

Above the elaborately ornamented gateway, where stand in high relief the statues of the Father of his People and his beloved Duchess Anne, in a projecting balcony, about the centre of the façade of the palace, a party of magnificently-attired ladies were stationed. Conspicuous amongst them, was the majestic and commanding figure of the Queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, and great was the beauty displayed by the distinguished females who surrounded her. As the stunning sound of the cannon told the arrival of the royal *cortège*, a shower of garlands descended from the balcony of the Queen-mother, at the feet of Jeanne de Navarre.

The countenance of Catherine had hitherto worn an expression of anxious suspense almost painful, as from time to time she bent over the heavy stone parapet on which she was leaning; and her eye wandered with uneasy glances around, as she occasionally turned to some of her attendant ladies, and inquired hastily: "Is the Princess Marguerite not yet arrived?" The reply in the negative, which had been several times given, seemed to cause her considerable

annoyance; her dark brows contracted, and her lips became compressed with emotions which she seemed desirous of concealing. When, however, she beheld the Queen of Navarre alighting from her horse, her stirrup held by Charles, whose face was irradiated with smiles, and when she marked the happy, frank and grateful expression on the face of the noble-minded mother of the young Bearnois, a load seemed removed from her heart, and with a long, deep-drawn breath, she murmured to herself, "All is secure!"—and turning from the balcony, entered the chamber of state, into which her guests were shortly afterwards conducted by their courteous and gallant host.

Nothing could exceed the cordiality of meeting extended to the unsuspecting and open-hearted Jeanne, whose eyes filled with tears of pleasure, as she presented to the Queen-mother her blushing and beautiful daughter Catherine, and her young son, whose bashfulness kept him constantly in the rear, close to her. Embraces, congratulations, protestations of eternal friendship, entreaties that the past should be buried in oblivion, and vows and prayers that the future might be all sunshine throughout the united kingdoms of France and Navarre, with assurances of the delight and gratification de-

rived from the present,—all this greeted the ears and charmed the hearts of the single-minded and guileless pair whom it was intended to deceive, and who had, in an evil hour, placed themselves and their cause in the hands of an enemy unscrupulous in guilt, undaunted in crime, and unmatched in cunning.

A magnificent entertainment followed, when every device that ingenuity could contrive was employed to delight the senses and engage the minds of the unsophisticated mountaineers, whom this display of splendour was calculated to astonish. In the retirement of her chamber, that night, Queen Jeanne threw herself into the arms of her son, and exclaimed, "Oh, my beloved Henry! what have I now to wish. The bloodshed and cruelty which have so long disgraced and desolated these fair realms, are at an end, and peace is now as undoubted as dearly welcome."

"Heaven grant it, dearest mother!" answered Henry. "How could we ever have suspected the King, or his glorious mother?—they love us, and desire only the good of France. We are indeed fortunate. But, mother, amongst all those beauties who dazzled me with their looks, how happened it that the coy Marguerite was not there? I should like to see my bride elect,

for all this is nothing without her. They tell me she deserves her title of *La Lune*, for that she eclipses all these stars, which," added he, smiling, "I should scarcely be inclined to believe; though I felt so rustic amongst them that I scarcely dared raise my eyes."

Queen Jeanne's countenance was instantly overcast, but she made no answer to her son's remarks. She had observed the absence of the principal person concerned in their visit, and she had noticed likewise the agitated expression of Catherine's face, as she replied to her inquiries after the Princess, and assured her, that, but for some mistake, for which she could scarcely account, Marguerite would have been the first to welcome her future mother-in-law, and pour forth her thanks, and tell the pleasure she felt in the prospect before her.

Jeanne's thoughts in a moment ran back over a series of years. She recalled the time when her warm-hearted and confiding husband had journeyed to Paris, on the death of Henry II; and no welcome greeted him, no one met him on his road, no feasts were prepared for him, no palaces decorated to receive him; but his very baggage was allowed to remain unsheltered in the court-yard of the house he entered, and this same Queen Catherine had re-

ceived him almost as an alien. She reverted to the schemes and plots laid to entrap and to annoy him; the endeavours to withhold from him his dues; the injuries, the vexations, the deceptions that had driven him from the court of the infant King; the enmities of the Guises and Lorraines; and, above all, she remembered with a shudder, Anthony of Navarre's last injunctions to herself, never to trust in Catherine.

All this a flash of thought brought before her, but she shook off the feeling it conjured up, and conversed with her son on the probable results of their present negotiations, and the marriage which must inevitably seal a bond of union, which it would be the mutual interest of each party to keep inviolate.

Henry and his mother, therefore, separated, happy and contented with their reception, and full of blissful anticipations, which the lately concluded peace, afterwards justly called "*La Paix Boiteuse*" seemed to promise them.

Catherine de Medicis had also sought the retirement of her private apartments, fatigued, more than was her wont, with the demonstrations she had found it necessary to make, of her friendliness and hospitality. A few, only, of her confidential ladies attended her: these were generally kept near her person; with some pe-

culiar purpose in view she was careful to choose them for qualities which suited her plans, and she made them instruments of the deep designs with which her ever-teeming mind was rife. Her step was disordered, and her brow lowering, as she paced backwards and forwards in uncontrolled agitation.

"Is it possible," she exclaimed, passionately, "that the plans I have arranged with such care, and which have hitherto succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations, are to be ruined by the wilfulness of a headstrong girl? I feared this, yet I hardly expected she would so utterly have set my commands at defiance, as to absent herself on so momentous an occasion. This slight must be instantly repaired. Did any of you observe when Marguerite quitted our company on the road from Paris?"

There was some hesitation amongst the ladies, before an answer was returned by Madame Claude de Lorraine, that the horses, litters and *coches* of the Queen-mother being before those of the Princess and her suite, her having suddenly quitted them, instead of pursuing with them the road to Blois, had been unobserved.

"I can trust nobody but Bianco," said the Queen, pettishly; "send for him instantly. His wit must find a remedy for this business; he

shall go to Marguerite, and not leave her until she sets out, to do away by her presence the impression her negligent imprudence may have made. René," she continued, addressing, as he entered, a remarkably handsome man, whose complexion told that he was her countryman,—"go, instantly, to Chenonceau,—I cannot trust myself to write to Marguerite: I cannot send any of my gentlemen, for I would not have it known that she has acted from caprice, but it is most important that she should delay no further.—You can do much—remember, she is impetuous, proud, and self-willed; be careful not to irritate her: humour her as you can, but gain her promise to come instantly to Blois,—nay, leave her not till she enters this chamber, and when once here I will take care that she escapes me not again. The night has not far waned, you will doubtless find her dreaming over childish pleasures,—literature, poetry!—when a kingdom is at stake!—draw her from them, use every means, but let me hear that she has entered these gates by morning's dawn."

He to whom the Queen-mother addressed these words in a hurried and passionate accent bowed low, but replied not by words. The bright glance of his significant eye, however, expressed determination and promptitude. Catherine paused before him for one moment, and

then with a smile of peculiar, satisfied meaning, waved her hand, and her messenger had quitted her presence. "And now," said the Queen, "let the King my son know that I await his visit. Every one may retire; and while his Grace is here, be careful that I have no interruption."

Charles was shortly afterwards announced, and entered, his pale countenance lighted up with unusual gaiety. His step was light, and his eye full of mirth, as, hastening to his mother, he kissed her hand, and then casting himself on a couch, gave way to an uncontrollable fit of merriment. Catherine took a seat beside him and watched this ebullition, while a slight smile curled her lip. When he was in some degree recovered, he said, — "Well, madam, tell me candidly, do you not think I have acted my part to admiration?"

"Yes, Charles," said his mother, "your conduct has been faultless; it remains only to be followed up."

"Oh!" cried the King, with renewed laughter, "leave that to me: you will see with what skill I will draw them into the net. I have sent letters already to every part of the kingdom, granting these foolish Huguenots more than they demanded. I shall do precisely what my falconer does when he sends his hawks in



search of prey. It is beyond measure ridiculous how they all come to the call, and how thoroughly deceived the mother-bird and her half-fledged birdling are. We had a most satisfactory and confidential interview before we parted for the night."

"And to what subject did you chiefly lead?" asked Catherine anxiously.

"We talked of Marguerite," said Charles. —The Queen frowned. "That young haggard, by the way, had nearly destroyed all to-day by her absence, but I expatiated on her modesty, ha, ha! — on her timidity,—and Jeanne seemed satisfied. It amused me not a little that she could picture to herself Margot such an awkward frightened thing as her own daughter, who but for that, would be handsome as De Soissons observed. The credulous mother of our affianced bridegroom suggested that the Pope's dispensation might be long to obtain. 'No, no,' said I, 'my own dearest aunt, my darling friend, I honour you more than pope or cardinal; and as for my sister, I love her better than I fear the power of Rome. If the Pope is fool enough to oppose my will, I here declare to you that I will take Margot by the hand and lead her to the altar in despite of the whole conclave.' She laughed at this. 'I am not a

Protestant, as you know, dear aunt,' I continued with a sigh, which had great effect, 'but I am no bigot: I have given my promise, and my word is sacred.' I then took occasion to praise her son, who looks like a young bear from his own mountains scared by hunters; and, in short, I have left her and our Marguerite's husband elect thoroughly satisfied with all things."

"I trust so, my son," said Catherine. "Tomorrow we shall have Marguerite here: we must amuse and humour her for the time, but I fear some outburst of thoughtless folly on her part. I dread the ridicule she will probably cast on this young Bearnois, who is certainly quite unworthy of her."

"Oh she has plenty of lovers to amuse her; what can her husband signify?" said Charles, carelessly. "As for him, it is clear he is a fool whom we can mould at will. It is fortunate that he has but little of his grandfather, and a great deal of his weak-headed father about him. We need not waste a thought on him, at all events."

The mother and son parted with mutual congratulations, and retired to concoct fresh schemes of deception, which should render the escape of their unsuspecting victims impossible.

## CHAPTER II.

## LA LUNE.

J'aurai toujours au cœur écrite  
Sur toutes fleurs la Marguerite !

*Le Blason de la Marguerite.*

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS was at this period in the very zenith of that beauty which was the theme of admiration throughout France, and the inspiration of all the poets of the time: her influence was felt and acknowledged wherever she appeared, and, where she chose to exert it, rarely resisted. She was totally without her mother's ambition,—to her were unknown her mother's cruelty and harshness; all she seemed to have inherited from her was her power of fascination. She possessed warmth of heart, generosity and tenderness, with a fund of good-humour, and a carelessness beyond bounds. Like her aunt and namesake, the accomplished sister of Francis the First, she delighted in the society of the learned and distinguished, spent much of her time in elegant literary pursuits, and was

a munificent patroness of genius and talent. Witty, spirited, full of observation and humour, ever pleased with novelty, ever seeking fresh objects of admiration, instructed even beyond her period, acute and rapid in her conclusions—all her bright qualities were dimmed by an inordinate love of admiration, and a vanity which carried her into every kind of imprudence. Self-gratification was the end and aim of her existence, and this weakness had been fostered by her mother, who dreaded the appearance of talent in all her children, jealously alive to the possibility of their interfering with her ambitious projects.

Never had Marguerite been hitherto known to allow serious thoughts or duties to interfere with her enjoyments; and if they were forced upon her she dismissed them as soon as possible, resolving that they should not cloud the bright sky of the paradise she endeavoured to create for herself. Too exalted in station to care for the cavilling of the vulgar—too thoughtless by nature to be impressed by the world's censure—independent of every one—brought up in an atmosphere of luxury and dissipation, she was the slave or the empress of pleasure.

Her manners were seducing to a degree that

surpassed belief; her smile was a spell, her beauty dazzling, and her power of fascination unquestioned. The court over which she presided, and which was one exclusively her own, seemed to combine all that can be imagined of enchantment, ease, happiness and liberty. This fairy court was now held at the beautiful palace of Chenonceau, on the Cher, which, though the Queen-mother loved frequently to reside there, she had given up for the present to the Princess, — her views and occupations making it desirable that she should always be near the King, who had on more occasions than one evinced a desire to emancipate himself from the thralldom of her presence, and to act for himself.

The reminiscences of her father's celebrated and lovely mistress, Diana, which might have been unpleasing to a daughter of a different frame of mind, only served as an example to confirm her in her resolution to lead a life of uninterrupted enjoyment; and the halls of Chenonceau, never in the time of the fair favourite herself, could vie with the glories and enchantments with which its present deity loved to invest them.

Marguerite had consented to the union proposed to her by her ambitious and designing

mother, because she was aware that her birth entailed upon her the penalty of being sacrificed to secure some supposed political good. Although, to a certain extent, indifferent as to who might be the husband chosen for her, she was particularly averse from becoming the wife of one whom she looked upon as her inferior in breeding, in manners, and in education. Refined to fastidiousness, outward seeming was to her a chief recommendation; and the accounts she had heard of the young mountaineer were not calculated to excite any desire in her mind to hasten the fulfilment of their contract. When therefore she, in obedience to her mother's injunctions, set out with the royal party from Paris to Blois, it was with extreme reluctance; and as she felt the fresh air of the country breathe on her brow, the thought occurred to her that never could the romantic retreat of Chenonceau be more enticing than at this moment, when the groves must be full of nightingales and the gardens blazing with countless flowers, all wooing her visit and reproaching her absence. Accordingly she proposed to the gay party, as thoughtless and fond of excitement as herself, all devoted to her wishes and glad to escape the formalities which they anticipated at Blois, that they should turn aside from the

road they had intended to take and shape their course to the palace on the Cher.

Thither the joyous cavalcade pursued their way; and while at the castle of Blois the gorgeous preparations were in full vigour for the reception of her intended husband, she left the care of all to others more interested in the event, and, to the inexpressible mortification of her mother, betook herself to her shades, surrounded by all that wit, talent, and mirth could furnish to render her sojourn a terrestrial paradise.

The night was far spent, the glories of the moon in its height of splendour irradiated the gardens of the famous bower of Diana; an atmosphere of perfume rose from the surrounding flowers and shrubs; and the chequered light which streamed through the foliage of the young trees was reflected from the bosom of a transparent lake, in the midst of which rose a fountain of delicately carved white marble, whose jets formed themselves into the semblance of feathers and flowers, and caught rainbow hues from the rays that glimmered above and around. Light arcades of Moorish architecture, formed of various-coloured marbles, supported innumerable small lamps depending from slender silver chains, which, waved to and fro by the gentle

night-breeze, seemed like so many fire-flies in motion. At the extremity of the lake a pile of natural rocks had been taken advantage of by art, and the waters of a stream had been guided to fall over them in numerous cascades. Here and there, in the hollows of the grey and moss-grown stone, lamps had been introduced, and, as the waters came tumbling over the dark masses, their glow-worm light shimmered and glittered through the dancing spray. A hundred nightingales sang and answered each other in the neighbouring woods, and were heard in the pauses of the lute, which accompanied some voice as soft as their own, while their rapturous chorus acknowledged the skill of the musician which they strove to excel by louder and more persevering melody. The weather was such as is sometimes met with at the close of spring, intensely, yet deliciously warm, and the sky so clear that it seemed as though no clouds could ever be known in a region so bright and blest.

The beautiful Marguerite and her ladies were formed to enjoy such a scene; and they gave themselves entirely up to its charm, banishing all thoughts foreign to its enchanting influence, and forgetting for the time that there existed a world beyond. Ronsard, the king of poets, and the favourite of kings, the adored of the Muses



and the pride of France, the glory of his native Loire, and the deity of *La Lune*, was there. He sang his own verses in a voice all passion. What he wanted in science and in power was amply made up in exquisite feeling and expression, and none who heard him with breathless and spell-bound attention, but wondered they could ever listen to other strains.

His quick transitions from pathetic to cheerful pleased every heart, and found admirers in every listener. Now he addressed extemporary verses to the goddess of the place, then alluded with quick thought to passing events of the day, poured forth soft compliments to each fair one in turn, and proved himself as good a courtier as a poet. Nor was the learning forgotten for which he had attained so high a reputation, and which was at that period so highly prized, though its display has since justly caused his works to be considered pedantic. But who should venture to criticise the master minstrel, who had purified the language, and introduced so many classical graces? So far from it, his delighted auditors were intoxicated with enthusiasm, and the enjoyment of the night was at its height, when an attendant approached the Princess, and whispered in her ear,

She started. "Not now," she said; "it is

impossible: were it the King himself, or my mother in person, I would not admit them.— Say, I will give audience to-morrow to any one from Blois, but not to-night. Oh ! divine Ronsard, sing again ;—why should anything of the world without intrude to break the spell you have cast over our souls ?”

“ No, madam,” said the poet ; “ if my songs deserve the praises you have showered upon them, the poet merits a reward ; and mine shall be to hear you sing, to listen to accents such as we only have the privilege of hearing, and such as never even bless the dreams of those beyond our paradise.”

“ Give me a lute,” said Marguerite, “ and let me try, if the fearful thought of the chain preparing for me have not altogether scared away my powers. But the verse, dear Ronsard, shall be thy own, and must delight, even if my voice should fail. How can it fail when I sing the lays of him whose natural bed was of flowers, and over whom the Muses themselves poured from enchanted urns the rosy water of inspiration ?”

The delighted poet acknowledged this complimentary allusion to the legend attached to his infancy, with emotion. It had been said of him, that when a child, as his nurse was carry-

ing him across a meadow, he fell from her arms into the midst of the flowers which grew there in profusion, and that a damsel who was passing by, bearing a vase of rosewater, as she stooped to lift up the smiling infant, deluged him with the contents. This was considered a presage of his future fame and excellence, and was frequently mentioned by his admirers.

The Princess, with a fervour and delicacy which excited in her hearers all the enthusiasm which she herself felt, then sang a celebrated song from the "Amours" of the great poet.

"Fifteen lovely childish springs,  
Hair of gold in crisped rings,  
Cheek and lips with roses spread,  
Smile, that to the stars can lead ;  
Grace, whose every turn can please ;  
Virtue, worthy charms like these ;  
Breast, within whose virgin snows  
Lies a gentle heart that glows  
'Mid the sparkling thoughts of youth,  
All divine, with steady truth ;  
Eyes, that make a day of night ;  
Hands, whose touch so soft and light  
Hold my soul a prisoner long ;  
Voice, whose soft, entrancing song,  
Now a smile, and now a sigh,  
Interrupts melodiously !—  
These are charms within whose spell  
All my peace and reason dwell." \*

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\* See "Specimens of the Early Poetry of France."  
—1835.

After the applause had died away with which this poem had been received, Etienne Jodelle, the accomplished poet, painter, sculptor and architect, whose devotion to the mighty master kept pace with that of his warmest admirers, recited some of his own compositions, and was followed by Baïf, also a poet of the school and a worthy pupil of Ronsard. Jodelle soon after begged to introduce to the company a young minstrel, destined afterwards to become celebrated, but who was at this period not more than sixteen,—handsome, elegant, and full of genius. He was named to the gratified Princess as a new candidate for her favour, and some jests were circulated when it was remarked that the young Du Perron was a Calvinist; and the coincidence of his arrival at the present moment might be considered propitious, as the Protestant bridegroom of his patroness could not object to him on the score of religion.

“Alas!” said Marguerite, with feigned gravity, “I fear the Muses will forswear me in future—the snows of Bearn will chill them, and they will forsake me. Can any tell me in what semblance my tyrant appears—has any seen him?—what says he—what does he, besides hunt, and eat, and fight?—has he any quality to fit him for our world, or must we bar its entrance to him at once?”

A soft voice near the Princess whispered, "If your Highness would really like to know, you have only to admit Bianco, the Italian, who waits without with some message from Blois: he is not a bad painter, nor does he want wit to set off his colouring."

She who spoke, and while she did so, blushed deeply, was the young and lovely Marie de Cleves, about the age, and nearly answering to the description which the poet had given in the lines they had just heard, and in which he probably sought to paint her. She had approached softly from a grove of orange trees, where she had been apparently occupied in attending to the animated communication of a young page of the Duke of Anjou, who, on leaving her, retired quickly, and was lost amidst the surrounding shades. She held in her hand a billet, which bore a seal, the device on which was a vessel and star, with the words *Te duce*, at which she hastily glanced, not unobserved, but unnoticed, and thrust it into her bosom.

The advice given by the beautiful Marie, for which she doubtless had her reasons, was listened to at once by the volatile Princess.

"Bianco, did you say?" exclaimed she,—why did I refuse him admittance? He has talents beyond his station, and his powers of jesting are

of no ordinary character. He shall describe to us all that we have missed seeing by our *escapade*; he shall speak of our lords and masters; you, Marie, and I, who are fellow victims, must hear him with attention. You must chide Anjou, that he has deserted us for our enemies;—or will you depute that office to the expectant Prince de Condé?" The face of Marie became so pale as to alarm her friend,—“What folly have I said!” she whispered softly.—“Alas! I forget that all have not their hearts unscathed, as I have! Ah! my friend, you are preparing for yourself a future of care. Believe me, it is well to adorn the heart with painted pictures of love, but not to engrave them upon it;—but I speak as one who never loved, and one, I feel, who never can.”

“How!” said Marie, “is there not one amongst all those who adore you who claims one thought?”

“Yes,” answered Marguerite, gaily, “many; nay, perhaps all in turn, but the vision passes away as quickly as a shadow on a mirror: my heart is so transparent, that it takes all impressions and retains none. But, we are serious,—let us all return to the river gallery where our repast awaits us: we will summon René, and add another amusement to the night.”

The gay party immediately obeyed her signal; and some, in laughing groups, strolled leisurely along the perfumed banks of the *château*, while others entered the glittering skiffs which were moored along the shore for their accommodation, and glided down the stream to the marble steps that conducted them to the singularly beautiful apartment which Catherine de Medicis had constructed above the arches of the bridge which spanned the Cher. Its windows now shone with innumerable lights, and within was displayed a splendid banquet. When the party were all assembled, a concert of soft music rose from boats stationed beneath, and *aubades* and serenades, for the hour suited either night or morning, accompanied by instruments of various sorts, continued at intervals during the repast. Bianco, the messenger of the Queen-mother, was introduced, and with infinite tact avoided betraying the extreme anxiety of his mistress, who, he represented, merely asked her daughter's presence, as she was sure the novelty of the scene, and the variety of characters she would behold would interest her extremely. He then touched on peculiar traits of several of the distinguished persons who accompanied Queen Jeanne, seizing the

ridiculous, and making the eccentric so prominent, that he convulsed his inconsiderate hearers with laughter. He was too politic, however, to say anything about the principal actors in the drama, but contrived so artfully to excite curiosity, that Marguerite was completely won; and before they separated, she had agreed, that with all her suite she would repair early on the following morning to Blois.



## CHAPTER III.

## CAJOLERY.

Oh ! dark deceit with painted face for show,  
Oh feigned friend, deceiving people so !

THOS. CHURCHYARD.

QUEEN Jeanne was seated near one of the carved windows of the *château*, which overlooked a huge round tower and the bastioned walls of that portion of the building whose severe architecture proclaimed their Roman origin, and whose solid and unornamented extent formed a remarkable contrast with the light and elaborately adorned façade opposite, on which all the taste of Francis I. and his successors had been lavished ; where, from stage to stage, the art of the builder was displayed in gorgeous tracery, more remarkable for its variety than congruous effect. Here a range of windows was connected by gracefully twisted and fluted pillars, whose richly foliated capitals supported tablets filled with classical figures in bold relief ; beyond, the character changed, and the hand of

an earlier architect was perceptible; grotesque heads peeped from the cornices, and extravagant forms wreathed themselves into harmony, to form a graceful termination to some spire or *tourelle*. This great work, which had employed the attention of so many kings, was not yet completed; workmen were still busied in making additions to one of the wings, though for the present all labour was suspended, and all the population of the town were given up to rejoicing.

An immense court beneath was adorned with gardens, laid out with taste and filled with choice flowers: overtopping the outer walls rose the towers of the church of the Jesuits, frowning, as it were, on the regal splendour which it commanded. A shade of melancholy reflection was on the fine features of Jeanne de Navarre, as she marked the pleased interest with which her son and his young companion, the Prince de Condé, were watching the manoeuvres of some troops in the great square opposite; and as she withdrew her glance it fell on the form of her daughter Catherine, who, seated on a low stool at her feet, was gazing up in her face.

"Are you thinking of our mountains, too?" said Jeanne, half smiling. "Your face seems a

reflection of my own, and so perhaps are your thoughts."

"Dear mother," answered the young Princess, "I shall never love any place so well: — I feel as if it were impossible to breathe in this confined air. Yet how beautiful and rich is everything about us, and how kind are the Queen-mother and her ladies!"

"And the young cavaliers, Catherine?" said her brother; "you say nothing of them. I wonder which amongst them will be so fortunate as to please my pretty sister?"

"They are very agreeable, no doubt," said Catherine, blushing; "but I am too rustic to attract their courtly regards. Besides, I do not like their air of condescension and superiority."

"What think you of the Count de Soissons, with whom you danced last night?" asked Henry.

Catherine blushed still more, and turned away as she said, "Oh, least of all I like him; he spoke to me as if it were necessary to lower the tone of his conversation to suit my ignorance. I cannot admire him, though he is certainly extremely handsome."

"You are singular, Catherine," said her mother; "for he is thought one of the most attractive gallants at court."

"There are many others equally so, I think," replied the Princess, "and less supercilious."

"You are severe, little critic," cried Henry, "and have already made progress in court manners, which I fear I never shall do. I am far more at home in camp: nevertheless one may amuse oneself here." He whispered to Condé, who smiled gaily at his remarks, and at that moment a messenger from the Queen-mother was announced, and the doors being thrown open the envoy himself appeared, who approached and knelt at the feet of the Queen of Navarre.

This personage was René Bianco, the Florentine, whose offices with his royal mistress were so many and various, that it was almost impossible positively to pronounce what position he held. Now little more than a menial, and now little less than an ambassador, Catherine employed him in negotiations of importance to the state, and in trivial messages to her favourites and her ladies. His insinuating address and remarkably handsome exterior rendered him, if not welcome, at least tolerated, more especially in the latter capacity. He had been several years in the Queen's service, and enjoyed her favour in a peculiar degree. It was more than whispered that his science as

a chemist was that which chiefly recommended him to his royal mistress, who, in common with most persons of all ranks in that age, sought diligently after the hidden secrets of nature, and left no means unemployed to discover her mysteries. It was said that the mother of Bianco was of Indian origin, and that from her he had gained knowledge withheld from students of other climes. A certain degree of suspicion and some feeling of awe attended him, though it was rather in his absence than his presence, for his ready wit and fluent conversation were not calculated to inspire other than agreeable thoughts. It was only in the occasional glance of his dark, sparkling, and deeply-set eye that might be detected a sinister character, and a searching and eager expression at variance with his frank and joyous manner.

Bianco was the bearer to Queen Jeanne of a token from his mistress of a pair of perfumed and richly embroidered gloves, then an article of great luxury, and a bouquet of choice flowers, arranged so that the delicate blossoms appeared like a star in the centre, and round it sprang leaves of the olive, the laurel, and the cypress: a silver riband bound the whole, on which was embroidered, in letters of precious stones, the motto which Jeanne had adopted, in allusion to

the state of her affairs,—“SAFE PEACE, VICTORY, OR HONOURABLE DEATH.”

Bianco respectfully presented this, at the same time expressing the compliments with which he was charged by Catherine. “My mistress,” he said, “orders me to say that she sends your Grace these flowers in token of the love that springs from the centre of her heart for you and yours, and which will be her guiding star in time to come. You have granted her Peace, and she sends you the Olive; you have gained the victory over civil war, and she sends you the Laurel; you have put to death every hatred and malice, and she sends you the Cypress.”

Queen Jeanne received the present most graciously, and a blush passed over her face as she remembered the thoughts she could not entirely banish, which continued to intrude in secret, but were cleared away whenever their object appeared.

“And to your Grace,” continued René, kneeling to young Henry, “I am charged to deliver a sealed packet, which will explain itself; only venturing to add, that—as she who sends it bade me say, that—as the *daisy* looks up towards the god of morning for life and joy, so she looks towards you.”

Henry, not without emotion, broke the seal, and discovered a bunch of enamelled *marguerites*, which he immediately transferred to his bosom with a gallant gesture, and thanked the messenger with a frank smile.

As René rose from his knee, an attendant entered the apartment, and proclaimed the approach of King Charles, who, advancing hastily and without ceremony to Queen Jeanne, saluted her with all the apparent natural enthusiasm of youth, throwing his arms about her, and uttering the tenderest expressions of affection,—calling her, with almost infantine playfulness, his *own aunt*, his *all*, his *béloved*,—till, overcome with his kindness, the good Queen could not suppress her tears, and a feeling of faintness crept over her, as the bouquet of Catherine, to which she had been smelling, dropped from her hand, and she leant back in his arms for support. Her daughter and her son were instantly at her side. Bianco removed the flowers, and presented to Charles an essence which instantly revived her: then, bowing low, he retired. As he left the chamber, charged with the grateful acknowledgments of the Queen of Navarre to Catherine, young Henry, still occupied with his mother, looked suddenly up, and was struck with the reflection in an opposite mirror of a

countenance in which gratified malevolence and hatred were so strongly depicted, that it appeared as if the face of a fiend had looked upon him. He started with a thrill of horror, but before he could account in any way for the apparition, it was gone; and as he had not noticed the departure of Bianco, he was not aware that the glass gave back his features.

"Dearest aunt, we have excited and worn your spirits too much," tenderly exclaimed Charles; "I would my good nurse Mabilie were here to tend you. We will send instantly to Paris for her; she is the kindest and best of women, and will nurse you as she does her own child, for such she calls me. But surely you must know Mabilie; she is your countrywoman, it was from you my mother had her first."

"Oh yes, my dear cousin!" answered Jeanne with animation, "if it be Mabilie Rolland, she is indeed a worthy creature; but many years have passed since I have seen her. It was but lately that I sent a young man, an orphan whom I protect, to Paris, and recommended him to her care while in your dangerous city."

"Ah, my own sweet aunt!" exclaimed



Charles laughing,—“you country people have such strange ideas of our Paris,—death and destruction to body and soul seem to you to fill every breeze, and lurk behind the very church-doors. But we are harmless, depend upon it, or will prove, at least to you, how happy we can be in the midst of our wickedness, and how well the air of my Catholic capital can agree with my beloved heretics. My good cousin,” he continued, addressing Henry, “you will, I fear, seduce us from our duties; for my own part, I do not mean to fast for a month to come,—and as to confession,” he added in a lower tone, “all the confession we will think of shall be that of love. We have beauties here, Henry, who will shame your mountain nymphs,—except one,” he added gallantly, turning to Catherine; “and it shall go hard but Marguerite and her ladies make you forget that there are stars in the heavens. To-night we have a masque, where your courage, young knight, will be severely tried; and I must tell you at once Margot is arrived, and expiring till she sees you at her feet. It is time that I introduce you; my mother waits her Grace’s pleasure to present a daughter to her.”

As he spoke music was heard without; the

broad curtains of the tapestry which adorned the lower part of the chamber were drawn aside, and two long lines of attendant nobles and ladies were discovered on each side of a spacious gallery, from the upper end of which advanced, through a richly decorated hall, the Queen-mother and the Princess Marguerite, led by the Duke of Anjou, and followed by a train of ladies all gorgeously attired except the Princess herself, who wore a remarkably plain riding-dress, and whose countenance was clouded with discontent.

The long-desired meeting now took place; but, to those who looked on, it was evident that there was neither pleasure nor cordiality in the salute given and received by the beautiful and haughty bride elect, who, in the coldest and briefest manner, replied to the kind address of Queen Jeanne and the frank but timid compliment of her son, whom she scarcely appeared to notice, and, as soon as possible, turned from them and busied herself in conversation with the nobles and ladies round her. To Henry's inexperienced eye the carelessness of Marguerite's toilet was indifferent; not so to that of Queen Jeanne, whose quick apprehension saw in it studied neglect, a circumstance which instantly alarmed her pride, in spite of the de-

voted attention and bland manners of every other part of the royal family.

From day to day, as fête succeeded fête, and every demonstration of attachment was exhibited to lull suspicion and create confidence, the feelings of Queen Jeanne experienced a change, till at length, instead of beholding in this display the friendship which was professed, her doubts grew into strength, and her mind became a prey to terrors and regret which she could not overcome. Catherine's experience soon told her that she had overacted the part she had undertaken, and was suspected; but to no one did she breathe her thoughts except to her favourite and adviser Bianco, and many and secret were their conferences on the subject. His recommendation agreed with her policy, that the court should remove as soon as possible to Paris, where it would be easier to arrange their plans, by drawing more closely together all the great leaders of the Huguenot party, and leading them by sure degrees into a toil from which escape was impracticable.

Charles, whose mind was excited in a manner which bordered on delirium, by the stirring future which he pictured to himself, was restlessly desirous of removing from Blois to the scene of some glorious action, which he felt was on

the eve of being accomplished. He therefore readily agreed to his mother's proposition, and preparations were instantly made to remove the court to the Louvre, where a series of entertainments was preparing superior to any which had yet been given, in honour of the approaching nuptials of Henry and Marguerite.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PROTEGE.

Mine was a proud dejection, and an unquiet weariness,—that is, sinking down the more by how much the more my pride aspired to raise me up.

ST. AUGUSTIN.

THE young orphan whom Jeanne of Navarre had mentioned to King Charles as being under her protection, and whom she had lately sent to Paris, was called Claude Emars. His childhood had been passed at the simple court of Navarre, which in its habits resembled the private society of a country gentleman, without state or formality, rather than that of a monarch, who by hereditary right might one day wear the crown of France. Only a few years older than the young prince, Claude had been chosen by Jeanne as one of his companions, and in all the daring adventures in which Henry delighted to engage he was at his side. To both, the haunts of the eagle and the bear were known,

and neither shrank from the ravine or the torrent which must be passed in order to pursue their mountain sport. The noble and generous-hearted Prince was beloved by all his associates, and he had frequently distinguished Claude from the rest, not only on account of the resolution and bravery he displayed on all occasions, but because there hung over his birth an obscurity which excited his compassion and sympathy.

A few years before the events occurred with which this narrative opens, Claude Emars entered the college of Navarre, and, his studies concluded, his kind protectress had arranged that he should become secretary to the President of the Chamber of Accounts.

It was with feelings of delight, such as youth alone experiences, that Claude one morning received a summons from Madame Mabilie Rolland, the King's nurse, the only person who in the great city of Paris had any interest in him, and whose motherly attentions while he had been at college had attached him to her with tender gratitude. On his way to the apartments which were allotted to her in the palace of the Louvre, as he passed along the crowded streets, gay with preparation for approaching festivities, he was lost in admiration of everything he saw.

Having but rarely quitted his studious abode since he first left the mountains which had become native to him, every object that met his view appeared fraught with wonder and beauty. He paused frequently on his way to gaze on the sumptuous buildings which the magic wands of Delorme and Brillant had called into being, and was greatly struck with the extent of the enormous structure of the arsenal, then newly completed; but his admiration was at its height when he reached the magnificent pile of the Louvre, rising in gorgeous majesty beside the river, whose tide proudly reflected its towers. The lately erected palace of the Tuileries, on which the Queen Mother had bestowed so much care and pains, and where she now feared to reside in consequence of a prophecy which threatened danger to her *from St. Germain*, in which parish it was situated, excited his amazement at so much cost and splendour.

By degrees, as he became accustomed to the brilliant scene, his thoughts, hitherto absorbed in wondering admiration, were led into a train of sad reflection as they fell back upon himself; and when he stopped at the door of Mabilles's apartments his eyes were filled with tears.

She was instantly struck with the difference in his demeanour from what she had been

accustomed to observe, and with the quick apprehension of affectionate regard, questioned him as to the cause of his evident depression.

"I fear I am selfish, dear Mabelle," said he, "that instead of my heart bounding with joy and delight at all the splendour I behold, I am thinking of myself. What am I in this pageant of the world?—an orphan—a nameless and insignificant being, ignorant of myself and of my birth; a worthless atom in the great scale!"

"Claude," said Mabelle gravely but kindly, "you speak inconsiderately: no one is worthless in the eyes of heaven; the accident of birth does not always secure distinction; and we have all much more to be grateful for than to repine at in our destiny. You are protected by a generous and good princess; you have open before you a career of learning, — perhaps of fame. You have youth, health, and hitherto have shown a spirit which could not be easily quelled. I am not, however, sorry to find that all the vanity which you see around you inspires you with serious reflections: it should have taken another direction, and led you to think of how little moment is all the grandeur of the universe in His eyes who disposes of events. Would that the fate of all those of our religion



were as secure as you may be in the insignificance which you deplore !”

“ Mabelle,” answered Claude, suddenly shaking off the sadness which hung upon him, “ I should indeed have thought of others,—of those to whom I am bound by every tie of gratitude and love. Tell me of the King and of good Queen Jeanne.”

“ You shall see them in a few moments,” said Mabelle, “ for it is by the Queen herself that you are sent for ; she desires me to confirm to you the appointment you expected of secretary to the President.”

“ Oh, my dear Mabelle,” replied Claude, again relapsing into melancholy, “ think me not ungrateful while I conceal from you no part of my feelings. I had hoped to be permitted to embrace the career of arms, rather than to lead a life of quiet and inactivity. My heart has bounded with emotion when I have heard of glorious achievements performed by men younger than myself. It seems to me but mere existence, to plod for years in cities with the pen, when the sword might be employed in such a noble cause as ours.”

“ But, Claude,” said the nurse, “ remember that the sword is sheathed ;—and heaven grant it may long be so !”

Their conversation was here interrupted by a summons to attend the Queen of Navarre, and Claude, in the delight of again beholding his benefactress, soon forgot everything beside. It was arranged by that considerate and indulgent princess that her young *protégé* should remain in her establishment till the period fixed for his admission to the family of the President Bailly, in order that he might be a witness of and partaker in all the gaieties which were now the sole occupation of the entire population of the pleasure-loving city of Paris.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ACCIDENT.

I was requesting you to come no more  
And mock me with your service. 'Tis not well.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

THOUGH it was always the policy of Catherine de Medicis to encourage every kind of amusement in the capital, and continual fêtes, even in the midst of the civil contests which raged without, enlivened the stately halls of the regal palace, yet at this moment mirth and gaiety seemed altogether to have taken up their abode in the brilliant city. Night after night, galas, public and private, made the air ring with music and festivity; the gardens were a perpetual illumination, and to be gloomy appeared the only crime in that happy place. The near approach of the nuptials which were to unite the contending parties in blissful accord, was the theme of all discourse, the object of all celebration;—the names of Henry and

Marguerite were sung in concert, and wreathed in garlands, wherever a voice or hand could be heard or employed. The grateful and well-pleased citizens, happy in the anticipation of tranquillity, readily contributed the sums levied upon them, and a general feeling of contentment seemed to pervade all classes.

It was on one of the most gorgeous of these festive entertainments that Claude found himself amongst the gay crowd in the gardens of the new palace of the Tuileries. The whole extent of the wide avenues was one blaze of rainbow light; gleaming from amidst orange and myrtle and pomegranate groves, were numerous groups of marble statues, selected by the refined taste of the Queen, and brought from her native Italy at great cost. Columns of sparkling water shot up in spiral lines towards the sky, and fell back with gentle murmurs into richly-carved basins, round which bloomed a profusion of the choicest flowers. Fireworks of rare beauty sent up their tongues and stars of flame far above the trees, and each burst was greeted by the delighted multitude with shouts of admiration. In different parts of the gardens were stationed concealed musicians, who attracted enthusiastic attention; and the feats of a party of rope-dancers were hailed

with the most rapturous applause. But while the vaulters were in the midst of their performance, a cry arose that a still greater attraction awaited the curious, for it was rumoured that the royal party from the Louvre were entering that part of the gardens which had been portioned off to enable them to walk in procession before the eyes of their gratified subjects. In a few moments the loud acclamations of "The King! the Queen! — the bride!" proclaimed that the eager wishes of the assembled multitude might be gratified by beholding all the regal hosts, with their distinguished guests, as they paced with stately steps along the alley of flowering shrubs which had been arranged for the display.

A burst of music, and a sudden discharge of fireworks, more brilliant than any which had preceded them, indicated the arrival of the party; and loud was the outcry, and violent the struggle to obtain situations most favourable for a view of the objects of so much curiosity. Some of the most anxious of the spectators mounted on scaffolds and stools piled on each other, while some earnest gazers clung to the depending branches of the trees, and raised themselves amongst the boughs. Claude had adopted the latter method, and was enjoy-

ing the sight of the splendid coruscations of fire that whirled above him, and blazed on the path of the jewelled party who were passing, when shrieks were uttered from amongst the crowd, and it was discovered that a large temporary building, representing the temple of Hymen, was on fire, and the flames were seen mounting above the trees, borne by the breeze amongst the multitude, threatening destruction to all within their reach. Great was the confusion which instantly prevailed; a rush was made by some towards, and by others from the spot, and screams and exclamations filled the air. Claude leaped from his exalted station, and, borne along by the crowd, was hurried he scarce knew whither, when he perceived a party of people surrounding the body of a man who lay extended on the ground, having been dragged from under a mingled mass of planks and fallen bodies: by his side knelt a young girl, whose gestures bespoke extreme terror; she was calling distractedly on her father, and entreating assistance from those around. But the confusion had by this time become appalling, and those who had assisted the fallen man were driven away by alarm, which magnified their own danger, and each new account added to the general panic. Terrified parties hurried here

and there, searching for their relations and friends, and forgetful of the amusements which they had risked so much to share, whilst the cries of those who had been injured were heard above the exclamations of the flying. Claude, with much labour, succeeded in defending the young female and her apparently lifeless companion from the pressure of the crowd, and was nearly exhausted with exertion, when, having cleared a small space, he contrived to raise him in his arms, and calling to the daughter to cling closely to him, he bore along his senseless burthen to an open part of the gardens, and, laying him by the side of a fountain, proceeded, with the help of his young companion, to administer remedies for his relief.

At length, to the great joy of both, the injured man gave signs of recovery, and, heaving a deep sigh, half opened his eyes: the first words he uttered struck Claude with surprise, and he felt a shudder creep over him as these sentences were indistinctly articulated: "Down with the Huguenots! — leave none alive of the Infidel race! — give me the sword — never heed their cries — I am fallen, but even yet I have strength left to aid in exterminating the foes of religion!" Other words died away upon his lips, while his daughter, regardless of

all but the certainty that he still lived, embraced him with transport, and Claude began to consider of the best means of removing him.

"The litter in which we came to this unfortunate place," said the young lady, when her agitation would permit her to reply to his questions, "was to await us at the South gate of the gardens; but how shall we reach it, with my father in this state?"

"Have you courage to remain here with him while I seek it?" asked Claude.

"Oh, yes, yes," cried she; "go instantly, I entreat."

Claude was hurrying away, when he suddenly recollected that he was ignorant of the names of those whom he had assisted, and he returned to make so necessary an inquiry.

"The President Bailly," said the young lady; and Claude, with an exclamation of surprise, darted away towards the South gate.

Many amongst the crowd were still pressing to escape from the gardens; others, finding that the accident had been exaggerated, were returning to the scene of the late festivity in the more haste as they feared to have lost the sights for which they were so anxious, so that he was some time before he found it possible to reach the desired spot. As he was gazing round him



in much perplexity, he heard his name pronounced, and was accosted by one whom he had frequently met of late during his short stay at the hotel of the Queen of Navarre, and with whom he had become well acquainted, for René Bianco, the person in question, possessed accomplishments likely to attract a young and ardent mind, and having been thrown into frequent contact with Claude, and having expressed great regard and admiration for his beloved benefactress, always treating him with marked civility and friendliness, the young mountaineer could not refuse him his confidence and intimacy.

Bianco was one of those persons who seem to possess a fascinating power without any moral virtue in their minds giving cause for the dominion which they exercise; on the contrary, there was an occasional hardihood in his sentiments, and a licence in his conversation, which at times startled the pure nature of Claude, and made him draw back from the offered friendship which he had been so ready to meet: he had always therefore experienced in his society a mixed feeling; he was amused by his wit and gaiety, pleased with his superior knowledge of the world, and his sarcasm and unexpected remarks on passing events, but he

was conscious, nevertheless, of a degree of mistrust, bordering on alarm, when he looked in his face, and vainly endeavoured to catch the real meaning of his bright but wandering eye, or to explain the peculiar smile which curled around his well-formed mouth.

He could not help feeling gratified and flattered, that a person, standing in the position that René did, and enjoying the confidence of the Queen-mother, should take pains to conciliate his friendship. Yet, at times, the pride of the unfriended orphan rose against a certain familiarity which he imagined spoke of superiority: he banished, however, this impression as quickly as it was made, reproaching himself with ingratitude and misplaced reserve. All this, however, appeared unnoticed by René, who continued the same tone of civility, in whatever mood he might find his young acquaintance.

"What seek you so earnestly?" said Bianco, as he took the arm of Claude. "Methinks, in this confusion, it were hard to find any one except by chance, as I have you."

"I seek a litter belonging to the President Bailly," answered Claude; "he lies in the gardens dangerously hurt from this accident."

"St. Mary forbid!" exclaimed René, "you may look in vain for his litter; but we can

place him in one belonging to some of the Queen's ladies, which waits close at hand."

"A thousand thanks," replied Claude; "come with me and assist in bearing him thither, his daughter will be overjoyed."

"How!— is Alix with her father?" inquired the Italian, in a tone of anxiety.—"Let us not lose a moment."

They accordingly hastened on, and soon arrived at the fountain, where they found the President a little recovered, though unable to walk: they bore him between them to the litter, and his daughter followed with trembling steps. As he was placed carefully in the vehicle, René extended his hand to assist the young lady to ascend, and, for the first time, as the light fell on his face, she saw who offered her his support; she started and shrunk back.

"Is it you, Signor René?" faltered she. "Was it you who saved my father?"

Claude, in anxiety to place the wounded man at ease, heard not the answer given by René.

"I have been so fortunate," said he, in a low tone; "and if my assistance has any merit in the eyes of the lovely Mademoiselle Alix, I am indeed repaid."

"I thank you, Signor. We are most grateful," said Alix, as she threw herself into the

seat, and, overcome by the emotion she had experienced, burst into a passion of tears.

In a few minutes Claude saw the litter move off, accompanied by Bianco, and he could not but feel a momentary pang of disappointment, as he lost sight of those whom he had so materially served, without having exchanged with them a word of greeting.

He returned home, through the streets glittering with light and gay with illuminated garlands, and was entering the Rue de Grenelle, in which street, at the hotel of the Bishop of Chartres, the Queen of Navarre had resided since her arrival in Paris, when a poor woman thrust into his hand some pamphlets, at the same time entreating him to purchase them for the sake of the blessed virgin. He threw her a few pieces and hastened to his apartments, where, exhausted with the fatigue and agitation of the evening, he cast himself upon a couch. The singular manner of his meeting with the President, haunted his imagination, and he tried to form a less vague idea of his daughter. The occasional flashes of light which had fallen on her, had discovered to him a slight and graceful figure, and delicate and peculiarly small white hands; but the tresses of her long dark hair had fallen so entirely over her face, as she bent beside her

father, that he had only imperfectly seen her countenance. He now vainly regretted having been so soon separated by the crowd from them. "However," he thought, "in a few days I am to be under the same roof with her, and my wish will be gratified. Bianco, it seems, is known to them. I will ask him to describe her to me minutely."

He was indulging in a variety of reveries, all tending to the same point, when a quick step in the corridor recalled him to himself, and the next moment the Italian entered. "I have seen the President and his daughter to their hotel," said he, "and now come to ascertain how fares their champion, as I return from an embassy to Queen Jeanne, from my Donna Catarina."

Claude instantly loaded him with inquiries, and heard in answer a description of Made-moiselle Alix, coloured with all the vividness of Italian painting. "Beware how you behold her, '*de la regarder vous gardez ;*' but above all beware how you love her," said René, "for I, myself, pretend to the honour of serving this divinity."

"Oh !" said Claude, "you jest ; neither of us have a right to cast our eyes so high : the fair

Alix would not condescend to regard me, a poor secretary, nor you, a rich perfumer."

This was said carelessly, without any intention of offending, but René bit his lip in mortification, as he replied, "My friend, Claude, you mistake — the house of Medicis itself sprang from one of my calling,—a dealer in drugs; and the favourite of such a mistress as Catherine, is not so powerless nor so mean as you seem to imagine. I know well that there is scarcely a family of equal rank with that of the President, who would disdain an alliance with one whose future fortunes may be far above his birth."

"Well," said Claude, "I give you joy; for myself, I have not so bright a star."

"Had you ever your nativity calculated?" asked Bianco.

"Not that I know of," answered Claude.

"But I have," said the Italian gravely; "and I myself have studied the art."

"You cannot really consider it one?" replied the young man.

"Not consider it so!" exclaimed René, with enthusiasm. "I look upon it as a sublime science, difficult of attainment, but worthy of any toil to become master of."

"If you credit prediction," returned Claude,

"that delivered at the birth of your Queen Catherine, is scarcely pleasing to record, for it is said the stars threatened evil to the place where she should take up her abode."

"True," said René, in an absent tone, his mind evidently absorbed in the subject; "Basilio declared that she should be raised to the highest dignity the world can bestow."

"Ay, but he added," said Claude, — "for I heard it but yesterday discussed in the public streets, while the Queen was passing in her chariot, — that she would cause the ruin of the country, and of the house into which she married: but we, of Bearn, pay little attention to the dreams of astrology — had we done so, we should never have left our mountains, for many and great were the evils threatened to our good Queen, if she undertook this journey, which has turned out so happily for her and for France."

While he spoke, Bianco bent his head to conceal a lurking sneer, and busied himself in turning over the leaves of the pamphlets which Claude had received from the poor woman. "Ha!" cried he suddenly, "What have we here? some of the centuries of the great Michel Nostrodamus, the mathematician. I see, though you profess to despise the noble art, you sometimes amuse yourself with its revelations; and,

behold ! is there not proof in the first page I take up of the truth of prophecy ! Does he not expressly foretell the manner of King Henry the Second's death ? ay, and here is the same predicted by Luc Gauric, who promised the King long life if he escaped the danger that threatened him in the sixty-third and sixty-fourth years of his age. Did not Jerome Cardin say the same, though none dared report it to his Majesty : besides the Jew, who warned him to beware of combat between man and man. My donna Catarina endeavoured to persuade him not to enter the lists, and to discontinue the jousts after the third day, but in vain."

"What became of the unfortunate Count de Montgomery ?" asked Claude. "I heard that Queen Catherine could not forgive his unintentional crime."

"She will never forgive it," said Bianco ; "he fled to England, where he was protected, and has since been in arms with your party,—he is in Paris now." As he uttered the last words a gloom passed over the brow of René, and he was silent for a few moments.

Claude continued : "I hold all these predictions as mere visions, adapted but as the event occurs ; otherwise they had been entirely forgotten, as they deserve to be."



"But, how say you?" exclaimed his friend; "here is the prophecy of one of your own Huguenots." — He went on reading the title: "*Words uttered a Twelvemonth since by a Dying Man,*"—"Peace is made suddenly, and in our favour: new alliances, treaties, and a marriage. *She* will go to Paris and *die there*. All the nobles will assemble. Events crowd on each other. Oh! what a change!—what treachery!—what cruelty!' By Heaven!" muttered René, drawing his dark brows close over his eyes,—“there is meaning in this.”

"Why," said Claude, laughing, "I was just thinking there was none: who can find meaning in such raving?"

"Give me these papers," said Bianco, rising suddenly.

"Willingly," said Claude, "they are entirely useless to me, or to any one, I should imagine."

As he spoke Claude stooped to collect the pamphlets together, and was handing them to Bianco, when he was struck with the fixed look of intense interest with which he was regarding him.

"You have served, it seems, my young friend," said he; "or do the students at the college of Navarre amuse themselves with war after the fashion of those at St. Germain des Prés?"

"What mean you?" asked Claude with surprise.

"I allude," answered René, bringing his eye close to his listener's face, "to the broad scar which you bear on your forehead; how came you by it?"

The tone in which the question was asked was so hollow and deep that Claude could not but remark it.—"What," said he, "are you one of those whom wounds affright? I should not have thought it. I never felt the pain of this, for I was an infant when I received it, from a ruffian who, no doubt, intended that the blow should be mortal."

"Strange!" said René;—"how did this happen?"

"Oh!" answered Claude sadly, "it is a melancholy story; when I first heard it I learnt I was an orphan,—my father was murdered by the same hand that aimed at my life."

"And did Anthony of Navarre adopt you then?" asked René, hurriedly.

"Oh, you have heard my history, I see," said Claude.

"Partially," answered the Italian, turning away, as Claude went on to relate some passages of his early life.

"This chain," he said, taking from his bosom

one which he wore, and kissing it, "is all that is left me of a father I never knew."

Bianco bent forward eagerly to examine it, and as he did so touched a spring which Claude had never perceived, and displayed beneath the clasp a wreath of gold flowers, within which was minutely engraved an altar, with the words "*ardo y adoro*," and the initials *G. A.* entwined. Claude uttered an exclamation of surprise, and Bianco, in some confusion, closed the clasp. "All these chains have a secret spring," he said; "I am surprised that you never found this before. But," he added hastily, "in the extreme interest I take in your history I am forgetting my duty. Queen Catherine will be asking for me. Adieu, therefore, my dear Claude, and be not depressed; the time is coming for great events, and in them, depend on it, fortune will not forget you." With these words he quitted the chamber, leaving his companion full of thought and a prey to anxious musings.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE MIRROR.

Come like shadows—so depart.

*Macbeth.*

WHEN Catherine de Medicis found herself a widow, and her son Francis II. king, she objected to remain in the palace of the Louvre, where her state and dignity were in some degree eclipsed by that of the reigning monarch. The Château des Tournelles had been destined to demolition, and it was therefore necessary that a new palace should be constructed for the residence of the Queen-mother. She chose as a site a house called Les Tuileries, situated at that time out of Paris, which Francis the First had bought to present to his mother. Its situation by the river, and the great space of garden-ground attached to it, made it a desirable spot, and, enchanted with her acquisition, all the taste and genius of the Queen were put into action to render it as magnificent as

possible. The first architects were employed—money was raised without hesitation; and a design, exquisite and unique, was made, which would have secured to her one of the grandest and best constructed palaces in France. Already the grand front, which still exists, towards the gardens, had risen in all its splendour—dome after dome, and arcade after arcade,—galleries and chambers, halls and staircases were built, and the façade was terminated by two pavilions, since greatly changed and altered. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the building as far as it had been completed, and Catherine looked forward to the continuation of the design which was to render her palace perfect when on a sudden a great change took place. The works were stopped, all the bustle, anxiety, eagerness which had been evinced ceased in an instant; every one was astonished,—the king, the court, the people, asked themselves why, after all the heavy expense incurred, after all the pleasure the Queen had taken in the superintendence, after the great success which had attended the accomplishment of her desire, a blank silence should have come over all:—total calm, where all before was animation.

Just at the moment when the last touch had

been given to the new palace by the master-hand, the recollection that the edifice stood in the parish of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois condemned it at once; for it had been predicted by a famous astrologer, that Catherine de Medicis should meet her death *in connexion with St. Germain!*

Too late had the fatal fact been discovered; but it was enough:—in vain all the beauty, the splendour, the charms it exhibited,—they were objects in future of nothing but aversion and terror; and this otherwise undaunted, enlightened, firm, and unshrinking woman, was subdued, appalled, and driven at once from the Eden which she was about to create.

What was to be done? Every hour she should spend in this dangerous place would be fraught with agony; every stone in the fabric would threaten her with destruction. It could not be thought of; another palace must be provided for her residence, and this fatal spot must only be retained for state.

The Hotel d'Albret was purchased, six other houses, and two immense gardens; but this was not enough for the vast imagination of the disappointed Queen, who resolved to put no limits to her extravagance at a moment when the finances of France were in a state of exhaus-

tion, and every consideration of prudence called for the strictest economy. Accordingly, the sum of two thousand gold crowns which had been paid by the nuns who belonged to the establishment of Les Filles Penitentes for their convent, was greatly added to in their demand, which met with no opposition, the abbey of St. Magloire received these sisters, and Queen Catherine was in possession of their domicile. All the gardens and streets in the neighbourhood were next to be secured, and her indomitable will procured every acre of ground which her eye fastened upon.

The same architect who had before assisted her with his genius was now called upon again, and the new palace promised to equal in magnificence the former; gardens adorned with statues and fountains extended in beautiful symmetry around the building; and in a lateral court, having a secret communication with the private apartments of the Queen-mother, rose an elevated Doric column, crowned with turrets and an observatory.

• This pillar, which outwardly appeared only ornamental, concealed a spiral staircase, destined to conduct the steps of the royal searcher into futurity to a small chamber at the summit, where her midnight lamp might often be seen

glimmering by the shuddering inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who crossed themselves, and prayed that no evil influence might descend upon them from that fearful and mysterious elevation.

On the fluted shafts of this column were to be seen crowns, fleurs-de-lis, horns of abundance, broken mirrors, and torn nets dragged by weeping Cupids, emblematical allusions to the widowed state of the Queen; while here and there, covering the niches, appeared interlaced the initial letters H and C, which under her direction were so placed, though if the pillar had been erected by the husband she deplored, he would probably have directed that the D should occupy the position she assigned to her own initial. The upper part of this building was of wrought iron, and its dome presented the form of a sphere covered with circles and half-circles interlaced, such as are not used by astronomers, but well known to those deep in the secrets of a science somewhat connected with it, then universally believed in and followed.

It was in a small chamber beneath this dome that the Queen-mother was seated alone, after having retired from the gaieties with which she loaded her guests. Here she felt that intru-



sion was impossible : that here she might allow full scope to the workings of her mind, here, even as her tower commanded Paris, could she command the destinies of its inhabitants and mature her plans of policy and ambition.

The roof was low, its form was octagon, and it was faintly lighted by two extremely narrow pointed windows, from which a wide extent of buildings could be discerned on either side ; a small staircase led from the chamber to the platform above, which, open on all sides, was covered by the dome before mentioned, supported by slender pillars.

The cornices were moulded into forms of great beauty : amidst garlands of grapes, ivy, and fruits, birds, and other small animals were introduced in the manner of an earlier age, and heads of chimeras terminated the projecting edges and pendants. In the centre stood a large table of carved wood, whose supports represented grotesque figures ; on this was placed a candelabrum of wrought iron of peculiar construction, from the middle of which rose a large double crucifix ; round this were arranged numerous small wax lights, and beneath them were placed tablets of polished wood engraved with astronomical characters, and records of historical dates. Two carved chairs answered

to the ornaments of the table, and seemed to indicate that only one guest at a time was admitted into this mysterious apartment. A book of "Heures" lay beside the chandelier, and the light that fell on it displayed its elaborate binding, encrusted with figures representing scenes of human life, minutely executed, and the same subject continued even on the small iron clasps which confined the exquisitely printed pages from the hand of the celebrated Simon Vostre; near this lay a thin volume bound in gilded copper: it was open, and within might be seen figures which spoke a mysterious language, and presented the horoscopes of several personages;—in fact, it was evidently a manual of astrology, and had been recently studied with attention. Opposite to the windows depended from the wall a mirror of Venetian manufacture in an ebony frame, also curiously sculptured, and beneath it hung a large enamelled watch with four dials.

The Queen was dressed in the black robes always worn by widows, and which, as if in contempt of all the grandeur which surrounded her, she had retained from the time of her husband's death. Her hair was concealed beneath the angular white cap of the period, and a grey gauze veil, partly shaded her features, which

were harsh and strongly marked, with but little appearance of former beauty. Her eyebrows were powerful and dark, and the shadows round her eyes so deep, that, large as the eyes were, they gave additional size and rendered them still more brilliant, although no aid seemed necessary to increase the lustre, which, when animated, they emitted. The whites of these peculiar orbs were very visible, in which they appeared to float, giving an expression of restless severity to her countenance. Her nose was slightly bent, and her wide and expressive mouth displayed teeth, large, even, and well set, contrasting by their whiteness the sallow complexion of her face. Her figure was tall and large, her movements full of grace and majesty, and an air of command was visible in her slightest gesture. Where her design was to persuade, her voice could be soft and musical, but its ordinary tone was deep, hoarse, and startling.

She had been poring over the cabalistic characters of her astrological book for some time, but her eyes were now frequently turned from her study, to the door of her chamber, or rather, to a panel, covered with tapestry, which fitted into the wall, and opened by a secret spring, known only to herself. Her foot beat restlessly against the floor, as she turned over

the mysterious leaves, as though she was impatient at the difficulty of comprehending some passage: at length, she rose, and approaching one of the narrow windows, in a pane of which, was emblazoned the arms of France, on a shield, she looked out upon the moonlight scene beneath. Slumbering Paris lay stretched before her: the crowded roofs and lofty spires of the great capital were all touched by the silver light, and the dark gulfs between the streets seemed like intersecting lines in the clear map. Over the tower rested a mass of dark clouds, which seemed to threaten a storm, but all besides was bright and calm.

“Sleeping, — silent,” — she murmured — “I, perhaps, of all this busy, stirring world of human beings, may be the only living thing awake, and watching, — for what! to study how to obtain that, for which my false stars told me I was born; but which seems to elude me, just when I imagine it within my grasp. Yet I was promised power, and I will be mistress of it,—it is the aim, the end of my existence. I have struggled, battled,—sinned for it,—one crime, more or less, can be of little moment — if it be indeed a crime to injure the enemies of religion!” She paused, and turned her glance towards the crucifix, as if she expected some demonstration of Heaven’s approval, then

continued her soliloquy.—“ Must I always have foes to contend with, who strive to baffle all my projects! —yet I have hitherto triumphed over them all. Of what avail was my imprisonment, and all the persecution I endured in infancy, when it became at last a question, whether the child, predicted to be a firebrand, should be cast upon the pikes of besieging soldiery,— my star prevailed, and the deserted, cloistered out-cast, became Queen of France: yet, even then, an adverse influence pursued me, and my spirit was forced for years to bow before the widow of de Brézé— nay, I owed the very maintenance of my state to her, — and submitted to the thralldom! — her genius overmastered mine; — but I had youth, — she would have waned; but then he died — he died, — and how?” She clenched her teeth, and pressed her hands tightly together, as she exclaimed, “ de Lorges! — the only man I ever loved—by whom I was condemned! Henry fell by his hand, and even yet I am unavenged. Diana felt my power at last, but he has yet to know how bitter is my hatred and how resolute my vengeance. My sons all thwarted me, — I should have been a sovereign, — and a baby contrived to rule through others. The race of Lorraine crushed me. Henry should have succeeded, and not this

sickly Charles ; but he will die, like his brother, disease is already wasting him, and to end his sufferings might be mercy. The Bourbon's pride must be checked in time, and the Guises awed, if possible, or secured. Yet," she added, stopping suddenly before the book she had been reading, "yet the star of Navarre rises in spite of everything. I cannot comprehend this contradiction—would that René were come—what can detain him?" She resumed her place at the window, then paced the chamber again, her steps heavy and slow, and her figure bowed as if by the weight of her thought. A low sound was heard without, which startled her, and she approached the tapestried panel, and listened; the sound was repeated, and she placed her hand on the spring; another moment, and Bianco had entered from the opening.

"I expected you," said Catherine, with a deep-drawn breath.

"Yes, madonna," answered the favourite, "there is reason that you should; there is reason for vigilance, or others may act more promptly than ourselves. I have news of import."

"Speak," said Catherine, eagerly. "I am prepared."

"Be prepared," said René, speaking with the

familiarity, which, when alone he was accustomed to use with his royal mistress, "to act with decision. The cow of Navarre has been warned — emissaries go about the streets with prophecies, ready made, to influence and alarm her followers: see here, a packet of papers which I have found with one of her people! She feigns sickness, in order that the marriage should be postponed."

"That shall not be," exclaimed Catherine, pressing her blanched lips together, as she hastily perused the pamphlets which René spread before her. "Ha! the Huguenots are prophets too! so be it. What the stars decree shall be accomplished." She paused a moment, then hastily approached the Italian, and said solemnly. "René, do you remember the oath you took on that day when Anthony of Navarre denounced you as a murderer, and a word of mine saved you?"

Bianco met her piercing glance, unmoved. "Madonna," he said, "what need of this? I remember that oath for a twofold reason: first, I had had my revenge, and secondly, by your means, I escaped the penalty; and my gratitude induced me to swear to serve you in every way which my art or my genius could

suggest. Have you since had reason to doubt me, or do you now?"

"No," said the Queen, "I believe you are true; I believe, as you say, that your star and mine have sympathy with each other, and that we pursue the same objects. Now give me proof. I require of you a service of some danger, — nay, more than one act must secure my end,—you must not shrink from whatever I propose. The first," — she hesitated, — when the Italian, drawing nearer to her, whispered, in a tone, which, though scarcely audible, made her start,

"The first! is it not begun already? were those flowers carried daily, for nothing? You mean," he continued, fixing his snake-like eyes upon hers, "that Jeanne should die, and that I should find the means. The means are always in my power. I have, within myself, a spell which can draw the spirits of others towards me when I will it. I have but to make the sign, madonna, and you, yourself would feel its influence. Nay,—I have divined your secret thoughts; for there is sympathy between us, and I know what you desire. Yet are there influences which can render abortive the result of a life of study,—we must wait for the hour. Know,



madonna, that to me human life is of no more value, than is the skin of the snake which he has cast, than is the shell of the worm which he has quitted. Blood is to me the same as water, though I prefer avoiding it, for it tells tales. I have a surer method, which, when I use it, never can fail. You have already employed me; give me work again. When did I return and tell you of defeat?"

As he spoke, rapidly and earnestly the mind of Catherine seemed to undergo a fearful struggle. She looked into his face as if fascinated by his intense gaze: her eyes were dilated, her lips white, and her hands hung powerless by her side: he finished speaking, and removed from her the glance which rooted her to the spot. She shuddered—passed her hand across her eyes, and sank into a chair; while Bianco, taking a roll of parchment from his bosom, began to read it with attention.

"René," said the Queen, after she had a little recovered her self-possession, "have you discovered if Montgomery is in Paris?"

"I have," answered he, looking up. "I know his haunts, and have intercepted a letter which he wrote to Queen Jeanne, appointing an interview with her, at the masqued ball, at the

Tuileries. I let the information reach its destination, for my own reasons. He fears to visit her at her hotel, as spies may observe him; but he is safe now; he has a friend who will not again lose sight of him, and his disguise will avail him nothing."

"This is most prosperous," said Catherine, exultingly. "In Paris, in my own power! Oh! with what joy should I hear of his punishment overtaking him; what reward would be too great for him who accomplishes it! René," she continued, taking a sparkling ring from her finger, "wear this, to remind you of what is to be done."

"Thanks, madonna," said the Italian, "your interest is mine."

"And now tell me," whispered Catherine, does the great work prosper, or must I still linger in uncertainty?"

"It advances rapidly," replied her confidant. "The planet Venus rises steadily towards the highest point of the heavens, and will soon fix over the head of her who is all powerful; but something still is wanting; we have had both blood and gold, but not enough."

"More gold you shall have," gasped Catherine.

"And why not more blood?" rejoined René, with a sinister look. "There must be blood of infidels; the spirits must be propitiated."

"They shall," returned the Queen fiercely, "though whole oceans should be shed to gain them to my purpose."

"Madonna," said the adept, solemnly, "the time is coming when I can reveal to you what never yet has been told to mortal ears: the great elixir which sages have toiled for in vain for ages is all but within my grasp. I have heard the answer of the great demon. '*Whatever God hath revealed it is possible for man to become possessed of.*' The infallible talisman of power can only be gained by him who first is master of the great treasure of nature, which for ever shines in the eyes of the learned, and is snatched away. Deny me, therefore, nothing; confide entirely in me alone, and I shall succeed: the mind of the searcher must be unruffled, his wishes must be granted, his earthly desires satisfied."

"Ask what you will," said Catherine with emotion; "the kingdom's wealth is yours, if I can obtain it."

"As yet," replied the master, "I know not what will be required. Great is my task, and mighty is my undertaking. I must conquer the

four points of knowledge, and become master of the four kingdoms, the mineral, vegetable, magical, and angelical. The first has the power of transmuting metals; that I have nearly attained!—the second discovers the nature of man and all kinds of animals, together with trees, plants, flowers, the art of producing and improving them, and contains the grand qualities of light and heat; the third teaches the language of brutes and all creatures, the art of divination and the knowledge of futurity; and, lastly, the angelical stone must be obtained, which is so subtle that it can be neither seen, felt, or weighed, but tasted only,—it contains within it the germ of eternity, and the key to all spiritual intercourse.”

Bianco spoke with energy and enthusiasm, and so absorbed was he in the recapitulation of the parts of that wondrous knowledge after which he sought, that he seemed for the time insensible to outward objects, and rapt from himself. Catherine listened, as if on every word he spoke her fate depended, and watched his features, as they subsided into calmness, with deep emotion.

“And now, madonna,” he said, “be content; your talisman will be mine to give after a mighty event has occurred, which the stars

foretell as on the eve of accomplishment. Look," he added, pointing to the scroll he held, "behold this conjunction, and judge if we can fail. But to make assurance surer, cast your eyes on yonder mirror: it has before represented much that you have desired to know."

As he spoke, the lights in the candelabrum suddenly disappeared, and the chamber was in utter darkness, except from a small flame which flitted over the surface of the glass opposite, and disclosed confused groups of armed men, some carrying torches, some naked swords—beneath their feet they appeared to be treading their foes, and smiting them with their weapons—the assailants bore on their shoulders a white cross, and their hands were covered with blood. Catherine gazed with straining eyes and outstretched arms on the vision, which faded slowly away, and slowly and faintly the lights reappeared around the crucifix—but at that moment a bright flash was seen, and a tremendous burst of thunder echoed through the heavens, repeated gleams of blue lightning illumed the sky, and returning peals shook the tower to its foundation. Catherine stood transfixed with horror, but Bianco advanced unmoved to the window. A singular spectacle met his eye; the lightning was playing round the pane on which

the shield of France was emblazoned with the arms of Valois; one moment it was irradiated with brilliancy, and in the next every vestige of the arms had disappeared, leaving the shield an entire blank. Bianco turned away, and saw that the eyes of Catherine had followed his, and that she had beheld the phenomenon.

As suddenly as it had burst, the storm passed away, and in a few moments the heavens were clear, and the moonlight glittered as before on the roofs and spires of Paris. Without attempting to explain away the omen, without another word, the mysterious pair, with a sign to each other, quitted the apartment by the secret panel, and both sought their respective chambers, there to meditate, and plot, and devise new plans to counteract the influences which seemed warring against them.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE WORD !

Elle avoit à vaincre en ce funeste jour  
Sa jeunesse, son cœur, un héros et l'amour.

VOLTAIRE.

EVERY gallery of the new palace of the Tuileries blazed with light; the gilded and painted compartments of the ceilings sent back a glow of rainbow richness; the marble halls, gorgeous with sculpture, exhibited treasures of art gathered from Italy by the hand of taste,—vases, busts, cabinets of curious workmanship, flowers, garlands, groves of aromatic plants, all combined in a crowd of splendour to dazzle the beholder, and make a scene of enchantment of the palace of which the Queen-mother had been the architect, if the modesty of Philibert de l'Orme had not done him injustice when he named it her entire work. Every portion of the splendidly decorated suite of apartments was filled to overflowing with fantastically dress-

ed groups, wearing costumes of all nations, and of every variety that fancy could suggest. Among the most distinguished was the train of the Princess Marguerite, who appeared as nymphs, dryads, fauns and sylvans, attendant on their Cynthia, and who executed dances of the most refined grace, to the admiration of all. Every name known to history or recorded in romance gave lustre to the scene; all of real or fanciful grandeur that could be collected thronged the gay place: chiefs of parties who had long contended through years of strife and anarchy here met in cheerfulness and abandonment. The illustrious leaders of the parties of Valois, Bourbon, Lorraine, and Guise, were mixed together in the dance, and paraded arm-in-arm along the glittering saloons: each seemed anxious to do honour to this re-union of interests, this oblivion of all animosities. Young Henry of Navarre enjoyed the moment with all the frank reliance of an innocent heart; his gentle sister cast off her timidity, and shared with him in the delights and glories round them. The pensive cheek of Queen Jeanne was flushed with a glow of pleasure as she observed their satisfaction, and hope once more sprang in her heart as she saw her son lead forward the beautiful, and now smil-



ing bride elect, with whom he performed a dance, then much in vogue, called *La Pavanne d'Espagne*, in whose slow and graceful movements the Princess had the reputation of excelling all the ladies of the Court, and in which Henry appeared to much advantage, while the fascinations of his partner were displayed to the utmost. It was true that the soft expression of Marguerite's features as she looked on her partner, was caused by the evident admiration she excited, and by no feeling beyond that of gratified vanity: but it sufficed for the time, that the cold frown which she had worn since her appearance at Court had passed away, and her part in the pageant was acted to perfection. The Queen Mother's brow was also unclouded; and nothing could exceed the charm with which she welcomed her guests, and excited and joined in the gaiety of the hour.

The Princess afterwards stepped with her brother of Anjou a *pazzameno d'Italie*, for which both were celebrated; and after a period, when the principal ballets and grand dances were concluded, all ceremony appeared at an end, and every one assumed a mask; while many, anxious to increase their enjoyment by introducing mystery, retired to alter their cos-

tume, and to carry on a series of amusing deceptions, which constitute the life of this sort of entertainment. By degrees, scarcely one of the original characters were to be recognised, and numerous were the jests and gay the sallies heard in every part of the spacious halls. The gardens were equally or more attractive; and there, in bowers of fragrance, were met groups and pairs earnest in their pursuit of amusement, and eager to enjoy the transient glories of their butterfly existence.

Among so many it was not difficult to escape notice, and there were not wanting meetings of more importance than the scene seemed to imply, and conferences more serious than the trappings of pleasure round would appear to cover. In a part of the gardens where the shade was the deepest, were two figures in close conversation. The one, apparently a female, was seated, covered with a long dark veil, which concealed her features; beside her stood a knight in black armour, who wore on his shield, of the same colour, the motto, without device, "*No ay figura por mi dolor.*"

"Madam," said the mysterious figure, "be warned while there is yet time. I have ventured into the very den of the dragon, in the hope of saving you and yours. There is no

truth in your enemies; there is no trust in Queen Catherine; she has laid a scheme to entrap us all. I cannot discover to what it tends, but that there is treachery no doubt remains. Charles has been heard to utter words of fearful moment; I know it from his nurse, who seldom quits him, that his sleep betrays designs he dare not breathe when waking. Leave Paris before it is too late; assemble your people, and begone."

"But, my dear anxious friend,—friend as I know you to be to my lost husband and his children," answered the female, "how can I recede now? Is not the hand of Marguerite almost in Henry's possession?—is not everything prepared? I own I doubted,—nay, but this very day I half resolved to break it off, to call my people together, and retire to our mountains, leaving the house of Valois to their ambition. But my honour is engaged; my word is given. It would be base to fly, and prove to them how small our confidence in all their apparent friendship, which, after all, I cannot believe is feigned."

"Madam," said the mask, "your word was pledged to Anthony of Navarre never to trust this woman. She has betrayed all who relied on her. She is vindictive, cruel, unforgiving,

and remorseless. For a crime which she knows to have been involuntary, has she not persecuted me to the verge of destruction—has she not vowed eternal hatred to me and my innocent race?—did she not destroy my wife and child?—oh God! even at this distance of time the thought unnerves me! Another has long replaced my murdered Agnes; many other sons have since blest me, but my tears are never dry for those she made her victims.—Enough of my own sorrows. It is for you, madam, for the children of my beloved friend, I plead. I warn you to beware—to fly if possible, and all may yet be well.”

“Montgomery,” said Queen Jeanne, for it was that unfortunate and devoted mother, “I fear it is too late. Would that one victim would suffice! might but my children escape! Go to Henry; strive to impress him with the danger of the moment. I will myself seek him, and endeavour to act for the best. As soon as you have spoken to him, I entreat you to leave this place, fraught with danger to you. Oh let not my imprudence be fatal to all my friends! Let me know that he whom my husband cherished as a brother has not sealed his friendship to our cause with blood.”

Their conference was here hastily put an

end to by the appearance of a gay party, who were approaching the shaded alley where they were concealed, and separating instantly, they left the way clear to a group, whose disguises were sufficiently slight to allow the quick eye of gallantry or affection to discover the object sought. The beautiful Marie de Cleves was led into the bower which the Queen of Navarre had just quitted, by a cavalier in the dress of an astrologer, whose undisguised voice told her that her admirer, the Duke of Anjou, was addressing words of meaning, but little mysterious, to her ear. The Princess Marguerite followed, and as quickly divined that the gay troubadour, who was entertaining her with a thousand compliments, and tender complaints was no other than the Duke de Guise, who had, it was known, long worn her chains.

"Oh, good astrologer," said the minstrel in a piteous accent, "exert your art, and let your predictions soften the heart of the most cruel beauty who ever caused the misery of a son of song."

"How is this, lady?" said the astrologer, taking the hand of the Princess: "the lines of this palm tell a different tale; there is no cruelty, no harshness here. Be satisfied, gentle minstrel; she is to be won by song, and the

*don d'amoureux merci* will not be long withheld from him whose voice can second his heart."

Marguerite laughed, and turning to the troubadour, promised him her hand in the next dance as an earnest of her mercy.

"But come," said she, "you must tell this fair shepherdess her destiny, O learned sage; methinks there are few who can so well read her heart."

"This lady," said the Duke d'Anjou, taking the small shrinking hand of Marie in his own, "is not destined to be the bride of him who seeks her; her star is higher—it burns brighter. There is another heart more worthy of her; and a crown is hovering over her brow, which fate compels her to wear.—Oh!" he whispered, "beloved Marie, wilt thou reject it? wilt thou—canst thou play with my true affection?—cast from thee a love which is pure and sacred as Heaven itself, and give thyself to a peevish boy, who knows not thy value—who is worthless of thy divine perfection?"

"Alas!" answered the trembling and innocent Marie, "what shall I say, my lord; they force me to this marriage. I have no choice. My heart is very sad, nor have I skill to conceal its weakness."

"Adored Marie!" returned the Prince aloud, for he perceived that they were now alone, "conceal nothing from me; my frankness equals your own. I know no form, no ceremony; I have no fitting words in which to tell how much—how tenderly I love you: all I can say is, that my heart and soul are yours, and that I will never resign you to another while I have life."

Terrified at his vehemence, though secretly delighted at an avowal to which her heart responded, the blushing girl sank upon a seat, unable to repress her tears, when both were startled by a voice near them, which uttered in a hollow tone one word which thrilled through the hearts of both; that word was "Death!"

The Princess uttered a shriek of horror, and fell fainting into the arms of Anjou; who, superstitious and credulous, like most of his race, and of the age in which he lived, hurried with tottering steps from the spot, bearing his lovely burthen with difficulty away. Having given her in charge to her female friends, he hastened to conceal his trepidation, and to remove his alarm, by joining the most boisterous parties he could find. But the fearful word rang in his ears, and at every pause in the music and

every cessation of laughter the knell seemed still audible to him. Nor was he the only one by whom that terrible monosyllable had been heard: the gay troubadour while whispering soft tales in the gratified ear of the beautiful and vain bride elect, had suddenly been stopped in his lay by the sound, and though Marguerite heard it not, the paleness of his face and the change in his demeanour sufficed to spoil the pleasure of the hour, and she soon quitted her altered lover for one whom the awful summons had not reached.

Henry of Navarre heard it as he sat amidst a group of young beauties, all of whom were striving, not in vain, to attract his notice and admiration: but he heeded it only for a moment, when he felt a shudder pass over him, which he shook off with difficulty, and then resumed the light conversation in which he was engaged. It came to Queen Jeanne, as she quitted the dark alley where she had parted with Montgomery; and the black knight heard it as he strove to win his way to the son of Anthony. While Henry was addressing some passing remark of a lively nature to the Admiral de Coligni, the latter heard the sound of that word close to his ear, and turned to see who spoke;



but there was no one near: and the attention of all was attracted instantly by the figure of a jester, who came dancing up to them, and with quaint gestures addressed each in turn with some joke, which elicited peals of laughter. At length he approached young Henry and the Prince of Condé, who stood in a group of their friends.

"Adieu, gossip!" said the antic figure, "I am going a journey to Navarre. Can I take your commands?"

"How;" answered Henry; "you show little wisdom to quit such a gay capital as this."

"You want me to stay to your wedding," returned the jester; "but methinks there are fools enough here already."

"But why do you leave us, is the question?"

"Because," said he in a whisper, "we are too much caressed here; this puts us off our guard. They pamper and feed us, while we crouch to them: the beating will come next. Farewell! I cannot relish these entertainments. I like black bread and liberty better than a gilded rod."

"Nay, stay with us, and show the wisdom of being content," said Condé.

"No, no," replied the jester, "I must be gone, and without delay. I would rather save my life with fools, than lose it with those who are too wise.—Ah, gossip," he continued mysteriously, "we shall all be obliged to whistle the psalms soon, they have already given orders that none of us shall sing them." He approached young Henry, and putting his mouth close to his ear, uttered, "Beware!—be on your guard, there is treachery on foot!" and disappeared amongst the crowd.

Henry turned with an uneasy expression on his countenance.—"This is strange," said he to Condé, "three times to-night I have been warned,—and my mother's face looks sad and anxious. Let us join her and my sister, and try to banish the care that seems to weigh upon her."

They accordingly made their way to a spot where the Queen, who had laid aside her disguise, was seated with her daughter: beside them stood René Bianco, who was at that moment handing to Jeanne a fine conserved peach, which he delivered from his mistress, and which the Queen of Navarre, praising its beautiful appearance, ate with much refreshment, for she complained of the heat of the rooms. Her son

led her into the air ; but her indisposition continuing to increase, she shortly after retired with her daughter to her own hotel, and the gay entertainment was soon at an end, having exhibited more than usual splendour and been carried on with more than usual hilarity and enjoyment.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE INTERVIEW.

I know not how it is my heart stands back  
And meets not this man's love.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THE day on which Claude Emars entered on his new employment of secretary to the President Bailly, the Queen of Navarre was reported to be indisposed, and on the fourth day from the commencement of her illness that estimable princess was no more.

Consternation and grief took possession of the minds of the Protestant party. The agony of young Henry was extreme; and from the moment when he held in his arms the inanimate body of his beloved mother a settled gloom seemed to have taken the place of the buoyancy and cheerfulness which had hitherto distinguished him. The Queen's fever had come on rapidly on the morning after she had quitted the masked ball at the Tuileries; she was en-

tirely unconscious of the presence of those dearest to her, and continued to call constantly for her son, who was kneeling in despair at her side. Words of frightful import broke from her tongue,—she raved of treachery discovered, of plots, of murder; and the name of Catherine de Medicis was uttered by her with execration.

“Where is my Henry?” exclaimed the unfortunate patient,—“they have destroyed him! — no marriage — it is all a cheat, a scheme to ruin us all. Let us back to Navarre; there he may yet be safe. Ha! here is blood! Catherine — fiend! — it is my child’s — my people’s; but no, no — even yet he will triumph — your sons shall not reign — they shall fall one by one beneath the vengeance of outraged heaven!”

These, and other incoherent speeches, struck terror into the minds of her attendants, and confirmed in Henry awakened suspicion: as he listened to his mother’s dying exclamations, and as he gazed in speechless grief on her pallid and livid form, strange doubts and horrid fears pressed on his brain. He quitted the beloved remains and his soul sickened at his coming nuptials, which this sad event had only delayed for a short time; he saw they were inevitable, and he saw too late that the toils were too closely wound round him to escape them.

Claude, on the loss of his benefactress, was overwhelmed with such deep grief that he secluded himself from all companionship but tears, and his natural sorrow was so far respected by the President as to prevent his being called upon to commence the duties of his office. Preparations, however, began to be made for the royal marriage, and Claude, by a violent effort, resolved to conquer his feelings and show himself worthy of the recommendation of his lamented patroness. The President himself, owing to the injuries he had received on the night when he was rescued by Claude, had not required his services, and some time had elapsed before the master and his new secretary met. When they did so, the depression of Claude's spirits prevented his alluding to the circumstances under which he had before seen him; but, had he even felt inclined to do so, the cold and almost forbidding manner of Bailly would have checked him at once.

The President was a man whose fine features bore the impress of high birth. His eyes were dark and bright, his hair slightly touched with grey, and his height and air commanding and dignified. There was nothing in his face or figure which could be objected to, but there

was a chilling severity in his manner which forbade familiarity or confidence, and, except when conversing with his daughter, a smile never lighted up his features for a moment. That daughter Claude had not yet seen, and he began to fear that he should never have an opportunity of convincing himself of the reality of Bianco's glowing picture. Perhaps the melancholy state of his mind, leading him to pensive reflexion, caused his thoughts to dwell the more on the vague and shadowy form revealed to him for so short a time under circumstances so agitating; though his prudence told him it was a weakness, yet he could not control the imagination which brought before him the small fair hands, the bending figure, the long unbound hair, and he again heard the silver, sobbing tones of that peculiarly sweet voice which he felt sure he should recognise at any distance of time.

He was one day occupied with these musings, and mechanically going through the duties of his office, when Bailly rather abruptly entered the apartment, and in a hurried manner delivering to him some keys, informed him, that being hastily summoned to attend the King on business of importance he required his assistance, and desired him to follow to the palace

in an hour with papers, which would be found in a cabinet in the apartments of his daughter, to whom he was to take the keys and receive them from her hands; he departed in haste, leaving Claude in some agitation. "The moment," he thought, "is now come, and an opportunity offers for putting an end to my suspense and ascertaining whether the memory of the daughter is as treacherous as that of the father appears to be." Almost unconsciously he proceeded to execute his commission, but when he reached the door leading to the suite of rooms occupied by Mademoiselle Alix he paused, and his heart beat violently. It appeared to him that the fate of his future life hung on that moment, that the simple opening of that door would decide it, and he hesitated to unclothe the mysterious veil of his hidden destiny; he strove to calm his increasing emotion, and advanced, when again his step was arrested by the sound of a lute, accompanied by one of the softest voices he had ever heard, but which seemed familiar to his ear as though he had heard it from infancy. The words of the song were those of a poem written by one of the numerous imitators of the great and favourite poet of the day, and the air breathed the very soul of sadness. The lines were supposed to be addressed



by the bard to the lovely Mary Stuart on her departure from France.

Gone is the sun—and beauty fled !  
Thou flow'r, that blossomed in its ray,  
Where shalt thou turn thy languid head,  
And, sighing, look for parted day ?  
Ah ! wither where thy gaze begun—  
Thy hour is past—gone is the sun !

Ye crimson bells, upon whose leaves  
Are stamp'd the words that speak of woe ;  
Whose urn the falling dew receives  
That bids each cup with grief o'erflow ;  
Ye buds, that happy lovers shun,  
Form ye my wreath—gone is the sun !

The song ceased, yet he lingered at the threshold ; the notes still vibrated on his ear, and he feared to break the spell which their sweetness flung round his heart.

The President's daughter stood near a window ; her back was towards him as he entered, and, as she hung over her lute in a bending attitude, her long dark hair falling over her face and neck, Claude was forcibly struck with the similarity of her present appearance to that on the evening when he had so imperfectly seen her. She turned suddenly on hearing his step, and started, with a slight exclamation, while her brow became flushed with crimson. "Surely," she said, in a faltering voice, "I was not

deceived ; you come to—.” She hesitated, and Claude, whose confusion equalled her own, so much was he impressed with the extreme loveliness he beheld, as he looked in admiration on the soft features and brilliant eyes which were turned towards him, hastened to say—

“ I come, madam, from your father.”

“ He is then convinced,” interrupted she, “ that Signor Bianco has falsely informed us, and that it is not to him we owe so deep an obligation ? ”

“ Pardon me ! ” said Claude, blushing with emotion, — “ my business from the President merely relates to some papers which he desired me, his secretary, to request you to deliver.”

Alix looked more embarrassed than before ; and, taking the keys from Claude, left the room in order to execute her father's commands, without adding a word.

When he found himself alone, Claude, recovering from his confusion, reproached himself for the coldness of his answer to her animated question. “ Why should I hesitate,” considered he, “ to ask her meaning, or to avow myself her protector on that night of danger ? Yet her father did not recognise me, and the service merits not that Alix should feel she owes me an obligation. Can it be possible that she does

remember me? René perhaps, to gain her favour, has attributed to himself the assistance I gave. Surely he did but jest!—he dare not really pretend to her. How very fair she is!—what soft dark eyes!—how unlike her father's!"

He was still musing thus when Alix returned, and presenting to him the packet, with a slight inclination, but keeping her eyes on the ground, was retiring, when Claude, resolving to conquer his ill-timed timidity, ventured to speak.

"May I be pardoned, madam," said he, "if I request to know the reason of the question which you but now did me the honour of addressing to me?"

Alix replied rather coldly,—“It arose from error.—I thought I had recognised in you a friend to whom my father was indebted for services which—but I was wrong, and—”

“If the slight assistance I was so fortunate as to render the President on the night of a recent fête in the gardens of the Queen's palace is that to which you allude, madam,” said Claude, restored to confidence by her almost haughty manner, “I am much favoured by its retaining a place in your memory.”

Alix cast on him the same look of grateful surprise which her countenance had worn on his first entrance. “There is some extraordinary

mystery in this!" she exclaimed; "I thought I could not be mistaken in your features, though seen so partially, and your voice confirmed my belief; pray inform me by what chance Signor René became our conductor home? I have reasons for the inquiry."

Claude hastened to relate all the circumstances of the accident, his meeting with René, and subsequent separation from the party by the pressure of the crowd.

"It is very strange," said Alix; "Bianco assured us it was he who was our deliverer from that peril; and though I could not but tell him it appeared to me an entire stranger who came to our rescue, he persisted in his story. I know not how to atone for our apparent ingratitude to you!"

"Oh, madam!" exclaimed Claude, "I blush to have recalled to your memory a circumstance so little worthy of such attention as you bestow on it. It was my fear of having offended by the boldness of my question, which caused me to do so."

Alix reiterated her thanks, and Claude took his leave with a throbbing heart. He was hurrying along the gallery, half afraid of having overstaid his hour, for it appeared to him as if a whole life had been crowded into that short

space of time, and that the confidence which had grown out of the mystery explained, had thrown down at once the barrier of ceremony which made the President's beautiful daughter and himself strangers,—when he was accosted by Madame Mabile. After an affectionate greeting she inquired whither he was hastening with such anxiety.

“I go, good dame Mabile,” said he, “to the palace, and bear these papers to the President.”

“Ay,” answered she, “he is closeted with the Queen-mother; I met him as I came from the Louvre with one whom I ever dread to behold, and it is well thought of, my dear Claude,” continued she earnestly,—“he to whom I allude is René Bianco, the Queen's perfumer: he seeks you much of late,—let me caution you against encouraging his friendship: there are strange rumours concerning his essences and pomanders, which are said to be less innocent than they should be. Beware of him!” she added in a low voice, pressing her finger on her lip.—“I know him, though he imagines years have effaced his features from my memory; and, believe me, all we of Navarre have reason to fear the favourite of the Queen.”

“Kind Mabile,” answered Claude, “I thank you for your caution, although it is unneces-

sary, for almost without being able to assign a good reason, I like not Bianco,—he becomes less agreeable to me as I know him more intimately. It has often surprised me to observe his ascendancy at court, and that those bow to him before whom others tremble.”

“He possesses,” said Mabile, “talents of no mean order; and, at court, the power of amusing and of being useful are prized, not honesty and principle. He is skilled in music,—which has a spell with these Italians,—and, above all, he is said to be an able chemist, and is reported to be an adept in the properties of dangerous drugs and minerals. It is known that he wears a glass mask when in his laboratory;—his charms are potent, nor, rumour says, does his conscience stand in the way of his preferment when the Queen’s service calls for the exertion of his knowledge. What, tell me, has a perfumer to do with these secrets? Accept nothing from him, his gifts are fatal,—and so are Catherine’s, for they are prepared by him. Had our beloved Queen been warned in time she had never worn those perfumed gloves, which pleased her eye so much by their fatal embroidery, nor those nosegays which René has brought so much into fashion of late. Alas! they were sent her by her deadliest foe!”

"Surely, Mabile!" exclaimed Claude, turning pale, "you cannot suspect—"

"No;" said Mabile impressively, "I am but too certain. But go, my dear child; heaven guards the unwary."

As she spoke she released his arm, which she had held to detain him, and with much perturbation in her step withdrew.

Mabile had from her very early years been attached to the daughter of the President; for having felt great affection for her mother, who died when she was quite a child, all her regard was transferred to Alix, whom she had seen born. The Queen-mother, on the birth of her son Charles, had availed herself of Mabile's skill and management: at that time she had not long been married to a respectable goldsmith at Paris, who had dealings with the court, and as the Queen of Navarre had strongly recommended her countrywoman, and the young prince's weak constitution required constant care, Catherine overlooked the circumstance of her being a Protestant, and was besides not sorry to entrust her child to one in whose integrity she could rely more fully than on the intriguing menials who surrounded her. Beyond this, however, she had never liked Mabile, and would long since have got rid of her

but that the attachment of Charles to his nurse had become a passion, and he exhibited for her an affection of which his sullen and wayward nature hardly appeared susceptible. During the frequent fits of sickness to which he was subject, and the vexations to which his peevish and irritable temper exposed him, her patience and kindness were his only relief and consolation, and he flew to her in all his moments of uneasiness and pain, with a certainty of meeting with sympathy and indulgence. In consequence of the estimation in which she was held by the King, Mabile was treated by all the household with marked respect and consideration, and from her valuable qualities, and the power she possessed over her tyrannical master, enabling her to assist many who had fallen under his displeasure, was a general favourite.

There was a tie between the mother of Alix and Mabile which had drawn them closely together; this was the powerful one of religion, and the nurse was made a confidant of a secret which the wife of the President carefully concealed from him, as she feared his violent nature would burst forth if he but suspected her conversion, bigoted as he was to the Catholic faith, and strenuously opposing all the new doctrines. Alix had been instructed, how-



ever, in the faith which her mother had adopted; and on her premature death, to Mabile had been consigned the task of supporting her in it under the trials which she had to undergo, as her courage had not yet been equal to the undertaking of communicating to Bailly what would be so distasteful to him.

As Claude resumed his way to the palace, the nurse proceeded to the apartments of Alix. As she opened the door of her chamber, she observed her weeping. "My child," said the kind-hearted woman, "what distresses you? what mean these tears?"

- "Good mother," replied Alix, embracing her, "I rejoice that you are arrived. I am much annoyed as well as surprised at something which has just occurred. Bianco has deceived us, as I told you I suspected, and it is to my father's new secretary that we were indebted for our rescue."

"To Claude Emars?" exclaimed Mabile.

"I know not his name," answered Alix. "But he has just been here on business for my father, and from him I have discovered the truth." She then recounted the facts which she had learnt from Claude.

"Alix," said Mabile, when she had concluded, "I like not this transaction. René

has some deep end in view, and his schemes I know are to be dreaded: now it is evident why the President has of late so much delighted in his society."

"Not altogether, Mabelle," said Alix: "before this event my father allowed his offers of friendship, and received him as an equal. I have long been mortified to observe how his pride has descended, though, for my own part, I never saw any merit in Bianco which should make me forget the difference in our stations."

"My child," said Mabelle, "René is of low birth and mean calling; but he is the favourite, the counsellor, the constant companion of Queen Catherine: the nobles pay him homage, the King himself endures his familiarities. He expects to be regarded by every one as an equal; and his insolence is not only licensed, but encouraged by his mistress. Alas! he is a dangerous and evil character, and while he cannot be trusted, must not be offended."

"Mabelle," faltered Alix, turning pale as she spoke, "I have a strange thought which torments me; and yet it is so absurdly improbable, that I shame to mention it. It has struck me that this man presumes to aspire to my regard, and, what is worse, that my father does not frown on his pretensions. Your experience can

better judge: tell me, dear Mabile, do you think it — yes, you do, you must think it impossible !”

“ Alix,” said Mabile, solemnly, “ I fear it is too true.”

“ Oh !” cried the terrified girl, as she heard the confirmation of her fears, “ say not so ; my father could never forget my birth, his honour so far, — would never sacrifice his only child to such a being as this Bianco ; the mere sight of whom inspires me with feelings of dread and disgust, such as I never before experienced !”

“ And with reason,” returned the nurse. “ His aspect is like that of the snake: beautiful to look upon in its exterior, but deadly and hideous within. Listen, Alix, to my surmise, and judge if I can enter into your repugnance to this man. When first I knew your dear mother, I was a happy wife: my husband followed the calling of a goldsmith, and possessed his art in a manner almost unrivalled. His workmanship was looked upon as superior to that of most artists of the day, and his business was flourishing. He was, as you know, a Lutheran like myself; but though at that time the laws were very severe against us, he was so much respected and upheld by the nobles, that we had little

reason to complain of injustice. There was a man in the same profession as my husband, who was also a good workman, but of an envious and malicious disposition. He was called Russanges,—a name which became afterwards sufficiently notorious; but at the time of which I speak, he lived quietly enough in Paris. His talents might have caused him to be distinguished, but his habits of dissipation and idleness kept him always poor. One of his companions was an Italian, known as Florio, who had a peculiar genius for music, and played with exquisite taste on the guitar. This man, whose character was much suspected, had a son, whom he had apprenticed to Russanges to learn his trade, having obtained assistance from the Queen-mother, to whose presence he was occasionally admitted, as she delighted to hear his songs, and always favoured her countrymen. A murder and robbery was, however, committed in Paris, and suspicion was strong upon the Italian. He escaped,—as it was thought, favoured by the court party,—and left his son with our neighbour the goldsmith, who soon began to grow tired of his charge; and, his embarrassments increasing, he treated the boy very harshly and cruelly, so that my husband, who had a kind and generous heart, could

not bear to see him thus ill-used, and proposed to relieve Russanges of his burthen, and make him useful in his own house. To this the other agreed, and young Florio was transferred to us. He was then about fourteen, and a handsome, clever lad; but as idle as his late master, and with all the bad propensities, as well as the talents, of his father. He lived with us some time; and we hoped to be able to teach him respectable habits, as well as his business; but in vain: and though before he was always complaining of the cruelty of his former master, yet now he was continually visiting him, and consorting with the bad characters who were there in the habit of congregating. We soon found that the object of these meetings was to discover and denounce the Protestants as conspirators and rebels, and fearful was the injury which these worthless persons did to those of our religion. Everywhere they were betrayed, and accused, and persecuted; their houses pillaged, their persons ill-treated, and neither law nor justice allowed them. The streets were scarcely passable for the cart-loads of furniture unremoved, which had been taken from the houses of these unfortunate and innocent persons, and it appeared as if the sufferings of our people had reached the height:

though a few years after the same scenes were renewed with still greater fury. The ungrateful boy, whom we had protected, having been one day reprimanded for ill conduct, hastened to his associates, and through his means we were denounced as heretics and traitors. A band of robbers, with the sanction of justice, attacked our house, and pillaged it; and it was with difficulty that I escaped to throw myself at the feet of the Queen-mother, and obtain a promise of protection. As I had been recommended to her as nurse by the Queen of Navarre, she listened to my complaints, and my husband was released from custody, and part of his goods restored; but neither Florio, nor any of his comrades were even reprimanded. In an attempt that was made shortly after on the life of the Count de Montgomery, this boy was discovered to be one of the assassins; but again he was permitted to escape, though my husband, who was on the spot when the crime was attempted, identified the young ruffian. After that he was lost sight of. In the meantime the death of the King occurred, and I had the affliction to lose my beloved husband, who disappeared in a mysterious manner, and was never heard of after he set out on a journey of importance, having a secret end in view, which

he was to conceal by carrying merchandize with him. Alas ! there is a sad tale connected with his loss, which it were useless for me to recount. Years passed away ; and amongst the numerous favourites who have by turns ruled the Queen-mother by their arts, none succeeded so entirely in gaining her regard as René Bianco, who, being her countryman, had free access to her, and coming recommended by some powerful friends, was soon taken into her confidence. I was long before I saw him, for he seemed to avoid being in my vicinity ; but when I did, though more than twenty years had passed, I recognized in him—I feel sure I could not be deceived—no other than Florio.”

“ Is it possible ! ” exclaimed Alix. “ And this is the man my father receives into his counsels, and whom I am expected to notice favourably ! Does he know you, dear nurse,—or rather, is he aware that you know him ? ”

“ I have been careful to appear unconscious of his identity,” replied Mabile, “ as I fear him much. I have already hinted to the King my suspicions of his unworthiness ; and I endeavour to prevent, as much as possible, his approaching Charles, for I suspect every one who is in the confidence of the Queen-mother, whose projects are inscrutable. Her son, the Duke

of Anjou, is the only one of her children whom she really loves, and for his sake I believe she would dare any crime !”

“ This is fearful !” said Alix. “ We live on the brink of a precipice, threatened with destruction every hour.”

“ Be prepared, dear Alix,” said the nurse, “ for the worst. I feel certain that a crisis is at hand ; and whatever happens, no good towards the Protestants is intended. Do not allow your spirits to sink or your courage to fail, for we shall all be called upon to bear to the utmost. Trust, my child, in heaven’s mercy, who thinks fit to let the guilty triumph for a period, and the innocent suffer. We must not murmur, but submit, and look through the darkness for the light which will shine at last.”

As Mabile spoke, her eyes were cast upwards with pious earnestness, a sorrowful yet resigned expression sat on her faded countenance,—it seemed as if a gleam of prophetic inspiration played round her. Alix threw herself into her arms, with a burst of emotion she could not suppress, and their tears were mingled together, when the sound of her father’s step interrupted their farther conversation, and hastily drying her eyes she prepared to meet him, and Mabile withdrew.



Claude meanwhile, on his way to the palace, observed that all the houses were being decorated for the approaching festivities. The cyphers of Marguerite and Henry were everywhere intertwined in garlands of flowers, while banners and drapery were displayed on every side. All wore an air of animation; every countenance was cheerful; and the acclamations of the people were loud as the young King of Navarre, mounted on a spirited charger, rode towards the palace, accompanied by the Admiral de Coligni. The open and manly countenance of Henry, notwithstanding that a benevolent smile greeted those around him, was clouded by sadness; and as he looked on the gay preparations, and the sparkling habiliments he wore, he seemed to be thinking that the mourning weeds for his beloved mother had been exchanged too soon. With a starting tear, which he could not conceal, Claude saluted the Prince as he passed, and his look of mournful and affectionate sympathy did not pass unnoticed by Henry, who, turning on him a glance full of kindness, waved his hand in token of recognition, and continued his way. His white plume soon disappeared under the arch of the palace gate, and Claude was following, when across the court through which the

princes had passed, he beheld Bianco coming hastily forward, at intervals turning his head, as if observing their motions. He seemed so much occupied, that he was close to Claude before he perceived him, and on his looking suddenly up, the latter was startled by the sinister expression of his scowling brow and the pallid hue of his cheek. His face, however, instantly brightened as he greeted Claude, and the cordial and apparently frank character which it assumed, formed a striking contrast with that of the moment before. The transition was not lost upon his observer, whose recent conversation with Mabile flashed upon his mind.

"You are looked for, Claude, by the President; I was dispatched to seek you," said René.

"I have been unexpectedly detained," answered the secretary, "and hasten to redeem my negligence."

"You should apologise to me," said René, smiling, "if you knew how much interested I am in your delay."

They advanced together, and René, with an air of friendly confidence, resumed, "You remember our conversation of the other night? Well, my star is rising, I assure you: the

Queen-mother has this day granted me a splendid pension, and has intimated to the President Bailly her wish that I should become his son-in-law. What think you of my fortune now?"

"You!" cried Claude, starting back, "can it be possible? But will Bailly — will his daughter consent?"

"Will they refuse," said Bianco with emphasis, his lip curling with an ironical expression, "when my donna commands? No, no, I am sure of Bailly; and as for the pretty Alix, her consent is easily gained."

They proceeded in silence; a thousand uneasy thoughts agitating the bosom of Claude, and René being occupied with reveries of ambition, till, having reached the chamber where the President awaited his secretary, they separated.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ROYAL MARRIAGE.

How could she wed?—what could I do but wed?

MATHURIN'S *Bertram*.

THE two brides, whose marriage was to secure the happiness of their country, saw the morning dawn upon the day fixed with feelings differing, yet in some degree the same.

Perhaps, for the first time in her life, Marguerite de Valois was full of thought: now that the time had really arrived, its importance to herself and those connected with her seemed to flash upon her mind, and to banish the levity and careless indifference with which she had treated the subject. Love was, in her estimation, a matter of every-day occurrence: she heard of it, saw it wherever she moved; every man who approached her either felt or feigned it; and so accustomed was she to homage and devotion, that its absence alone attracted her attention: she considered it a part of her state,

— of the real nature of true affection she was perfectly unconscious. She had more than once imagined herself in love, mistaking gratified vanity for a deeper emotion, — had felt pleasure in the presence of its object, and regret in absence, — but this was a pastime, and no more : she looked upon the existence of love, such as the records of romance portrayed it, as a poetical fiction, never intended to enter into the affairs of real life. Of late a change, sudden and startling, had come over her mind. Henry was to be her husband. She looked upon him as a person appointed for state reasons to be her companion for life ; she saw in him an uneducated boy, with reputed courage, supposed goodness of heart, and recorded generous feelings, but with manners quite unfashioned, with taste uncultivated, and a coldness towards herself altogether imperturbable. He had, nevertheless, in spite of his retiring quietness, bursts of enthusiasm at times which astonished those about him, and momentary glimpses of eloquence which threw into shade the powers of polished courtiers who usually eclipsed him : all this she witnessed only in his intercourse with others,—with her he was always studiously guarded and formal, his conversation in monosyllables, and his expressions merely common-

place. It was impossible that he should interest her: and how should she live with one who seemed to build up between them a barrier of ice as impenetrable as that of his native mountains.

It was a serious thought,—a fearful undertaking! Her heart was ready to accept his homage, but he did not offer it: she would have endeavoured to school herself into at least the semblance of regard, but he did not seek it. She had no escape from her fate; she must marry a man who was indifferent to her, and to him she was nothing more than a political appendage. It was, therefore, with bitter and chilled feelings that she suffered herself to be decked for this unpromising bridal, and she resolved to show her careless bridegroom that her inclination had nothing to do with the ceremony she was forced to go through.

The mind of Marie de Cleves was equally occupied with that of Marguerite, but every fresh springing thought was fraught with agony and unutterable despair. Young, inexperienced, innocent, and happy, she had never contemplated, even when she knew that her hand was promised, the misery which would attend the sacrifice. She was to marry, like her friend the

Princess Marguerite, a man with whom she was scarcely acquainted: with the Prince of Condé she had scarcely ever exchanged a word, yet she would be expected to devote the remainder of her life to him, while she loved, adored, existed for another! The Duke of Anjou had at length told her all that she had hoped, sighed for, prayed to be convinced of—and the conviction of her happiness and wretchedness came together. A frightful gulf was opened before her; she could not fly from its brink; she was urged onwards though she saw it yawning beneath her feet.

To her, pure as she was, and unsuspecting of evil, the character of Henry of Anjou appeared little short of perfection: his exquisite refinement, his insinuating address, his wit, grace, and the air of absorbed devotion he could throw into his attentions, were sufficient to have won a heart more practised in the ways of the world; but when, in addition to the charm which attracted all, real feeling and passionate attachment came to his aid, how was it possible for the guileless and confiding girl of sixteen to resist the spell, and to give up her whole soul to the delicious certainty of loving and being beloved.

Her daily intercourse with Marguerite, who

was tenderly attached to her, and found in her innocent enthusiasm, and total absence of suspicion, something to admire and delight in, favoured in no small degree the suit of the Duke, and gave him opportunities which he was not slow to take advantage of.

Although he could boast of no more morality than belonged to the profligate court in which he lived, yet, for the first time, on this occasion he was inspired with a real passion, almost, in its intensity and delicacy, worthy of her who had caused it—a passion which called into being all that was good in his character, while its evil, which, alas ! preponderated, was lulled, for the time, entirely to rest. He had, like the beautiful girl whom he was leading into danger, been so occupied with his happiness that he had totally forgotten the positions in which they were mutually placed, and, contented with the bliss of the present moment, would not allow himself to look beyond, although he could not but be aware that the fabric of his delusive fancy might be annihilated in a moment.

The terrible hour had now come, and, like those who live close to a volcano, and know its fearful explosion must one day arrive and sweep their city to perdition, yet put off the evil anticipation, and revel on the brink of the crater,



so Marie awoke to the horror of her fate, and was stunned with the extent of her misfortune.

The young King of Navarre, in the mean time, and the Prince of Condé, felt themselves victims bound to the stake without the means of escape, bewildered with crowding fears for the future, and an appalling dread of the present. They had mutually resolved to submit to their inevitable destiny, but they sternly resisted all approaches to what they considered culpable weakness. The death of Queen Jeanne, and the frightful suspicions entertained by the Huguenot party, had fatally undeceived them as to the professions of their enemies, and they felt that some further act remained to complete the tragedy so begun. Death, or some violent struggle, was what they contemplated, and this double marriage seemed to them but another scene in the mysterious drama preparing: for the actors in it they cared little, and were far from imagining what conflicts reigned in the breasts of those who were victims like themselves.

Such were the sentiments of the four persons who prepared that morning to take the principal parts in the great pageant at which all France was to look on. With these feelings

they joined their respective parties, and the ceremonies of the royal bridal began.

The Princess Marguerite, after the ceremony of betrothment had taken place, had been conducted on the previous evening from the palace of the Louvre to that of the Evêché de Paris, near the cathedral of Nôtre Dame, and in the morning the King of Navarre, accompanied by the Dukes of Anjou and Alençon, the Princes of Condé, the Marquis of Conti, the Dukes of Montpensier, Guise, Aumale, and Nevers, and all the marshals and noblemen of the court, came to the Evêché to fetch the bride, who was conducted to them by King Charles. The three royal brothers, the bridegroom, and the Prince of Condé appeared in the same costume, to indicate their union of sentiment and interest. This was a dress of pale yellow satin entirely covered with the richest embroidery, in raised silver, enriched with pearls and precious stones of great price. All the other Catholic princes were habited in colours according to their taste, each as magnificent as could be imagined; but it was worthy of remark, that the greatest part of the Huguenot gentlemen who assisted at the ceremony wore only their ordinary plain dresses without ornament or pretension.

From the Evêché to the Cathedral a raised

gallery had been erected, which was hung with cloth of gold, along which the bridal procession was to pass to arrive at the temporary scaffolding, where, in the sight of the assembled people, the marriage ceremony was to be gone through. First marched a hundred gentlemen holding axes, then the heralds at arms with their emblazoned coats, a long line of guards, officers of the king's household, and a band of trumpets, clarions, hautboys, and other instruments. Then came the Princess Marguerite, led by King Charles, followed by the Queen-mother, the reigning Queen, the gentle and amiable Elizabeth of Austria, Claude de France Duchess of Lorraine, and a train of princesses and ladies without number, all dressed in cloth of gold and silver, and blazing with jewels.

The immense square of the Parvis-Notre-Dame was filled with eager spectators, scarcely kept back by the multitude of guards, whose lines extended along the whole way from the palace of the Louvre to the cathedral, and it seemed as if the whole population of Paris and its environs were poured forth into the streets through which the magnificent procession of the kings and queens concerned in the ceremony of this important marriage was to pass. From the roofs of the churches of St. Chris-

tophe, and of Ste. Geneviève des Ardens, of St. Jean le Rond, and St. Denis du Pas, myriads of eyes were gazing on the scene below; and all the numerous religious edifices besides, which then surrounded their great mother, allowed the people on that day to enjoy the advantage which their exalted position afforded. The sombre and severe character of these antique buildings was changed, as if by magic; their usually gloomy aspect gave place to an air of lightness and gaiety,—garlands, flags, streamers, scarfs, fluttered from every window and loophole, and the gorgeous and majestic pile of Notre Dame itself assumed for the time a less solemn and awful appearance. The magnificent façade of this imposing edifice then, as ever, offered a spectacle worthy of the gaze of the admiring crowd. Its three irregular porticos, surcharged with statues and crowded with ornaments, rose proudly as if to welcome the guests who sought to enter those wondrous gates of wrought iron, whose marvellous delicacy and elaborate beauty it was currently believed could only have been produced by unearthly hands. The mysterious zodiac which ornamented the chief entrance was looked upon on this occasion as fraught with more than usual meaning, and there were some amongst

the crowd who did not hesitate to affirm that the figure of the Holy Virgin, which the pious inventor had substituted for that of Ceres, bowed her head as the bridal train approached. However this might be, onward it came glittering with gold and gems, one mass of uninterrupted splendour. From their niches along the whole extent of the face of the church, the twenty-seven statues of a race of kings seemed to look down with exultation, as a peal of artillery, loud, long, and solemn, announced the arrival of the royal visitants.

Above the principal portico, beneath the great rose window, the platform had been erected on which Henry of Navarre and his bride were to be exhibited to the people, and where the service was to be concluded. Within was nearly the same concourse of spectators as without, for surrounding the choir, the nave, and extending along the line of arches, the beautiful gallery supported by one hundred and eight slender columns was filled to overflowing by splendidly dressed persons anxious to witness the spectacle.

From the hundred painted windows and from the three gorgeous roses the light of a mid-day summer sun poured down a flood of radiance, touching with every hue of the rainbow the

carved foliage of the marble pillars, and casting gleams of variegated colour on the chequered floor. In forty-five chapels round, the altars were decked with the most sumptuous ornaments, a multitude of lights burnt before every shrine, and relics of the most precious nature were exhibited to the eyes of the believer, amongst which a finger of St. John the Baptist and part of the head of St. Denis were not the least conspicuous. Huge, fierce, and menacing, leaning against a pillar of the nave, the gigantic figure of St. Christopher, twenty-eight feet in height, bent under the weight of the miraculous infant borne on his shoulders, and supported on the trunk of an enormous tree, appeared regarding with attention the train which swept past him; the equestrian statue of Philip de Valois seemed also instinct with life and about to urge his war-steed onwards, as he did when, after the battle of Cassel, the redoubtable warrior entering the church fully caparisoned, his visor closed, his sword in hand, rode up to the high altar, there to return thanks to the blessed Virgin for the victory he had gained.

The train of nobles, princes and ladies slowly advanced to the high altar, where they were to hear mass. The Protestant part of the procession separated themselves from the rest and

joined the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé in the choir, where they waited till the Cardinal de Bourbon had gone through that sacred service and they were summoned to take their part in the marriage ceremony.

In a conspicuous situation in the gallery reserved for the friends and intimates of those in power, sat the President Bailly and his beautiful daughter Alix, spectators of the pageant, and at no great distance from them, leaning against one of the delicate columns, stood the secretary Claude Emars. His gaze was not apparently attracted by the splendid scene around him, the glittering lights, the blaze of jewels, the gorgeous pageantry—neither did he seem to have ears for the solemn and entrancing melody, the bursts of harmonious fervour which echoed through the stupendous aisles, and lingered amidst the *forest* of beams which adorned the majestic roof,—there was but one object in all that glorious assemblage which had power to occupy his mind; and that was Alix. She was, like all around her, richly dressed, and her beauty, if possible, was more than usually remarkable; but Claude observed that her countenance wore no appearance of pleasure, and that from time to time she cast an alarmed, anxious glance around, as

if her eyes feared to encounter some object they would willingly avoid. As he bent forward, almost unconsciously gazing upon her, he was suddenly recalled to recollection by the deep blush that overspread her brow as her glance met his and she recognised the person who was so intently occupied in contemplating her features. Claude instantly cast down his eyes in equal confusion and an emotion which he feared another look would betray. He had not entirely recovered his presence of mind when his regards rested on the features of René Bianco: he saw him approach the spot where Alix sat, and with his accustomed ease and effrontery address the President and his daughter. With difficulty repressing an exclamation of vexation, he watched the movements of the party, and observed the looks of Alix when René spoke to her to be those of horror, so far did they exceed the expression of mere aversion. The cold and unmoved countenance of Bailly preserved its usual character. René was himself all cheerfulness and exultation; his dress was peculiarly splendid, and set off to advantage his remarkably handsome figure, while the high white plume that waved over his dark brows relieved the olive tint of his complexion, and as he pointed out



to his companions the approach of Queen Catherine, he seemed no unfitting favourite for such a personage.

The Queen-mother and her followers were, at the moment when all this was passing, proceeding, as has been said, towards the high altar. She leant on the arm of her favourite son Anjou, whose face was very pale, and his eye wandering with an expression of pain and uneasiness little suited to the occasion: he scarcely looked up, and carefully avoided turning his eyes towards the group of ladies, amongst whom was the interesting and unfortunate Marie de Cleves.

As they passed the gallery, she paused and beckoned to René, who was instantly at her side. She said a few words to him in a low voice, while her large bold eyes were fixed on Alix, who stood pale, and almost breathless, the object of her scrutiny. At length, after a significant smile bestowed on her favourite, she continued her way, while Alix sunk back on her seat pale as marble, and apparently as inanimate. Her situation did not, however, attract attention, for every eye was turned in the direction of the glittering party who were passing. Claude watched her with agonized feelings, and a sympathy which he did not

attempt to control; it seemed to him that he had a right to gaze upon her,—to pity her, to feel with her, now that she was deserted by all besides; and he almost exulted to think that his was perhaps the only heart in all that crowded place which responded to hers, unconscious though she was of what he was at that moment enduring. So engrossed was he with her alone, that a circumstance escaped his observation, by no means calculated to have abated his uneasiness.

Attracted by the attention of the Queen-mother, the eyes of several of the courtiers were directed towards the object of her regard, and amongst others the Count de Coconnas, and the celebrated La Mole, who were following conspicuously in the train, and paused a moment at the same time as Catherine.

Count Boniface La Mole was one of the most remarkable persons of his time, renowned for the elegance of his person, and the éclat attached to all that belonged to him. His taste was the criterion of fashion; his approval stamped value on every new invention, and every extravagant fashion and habit. The poets, players, and men of letters of the day, sought his applause. The beauties who surrounded the politic and intriguing Catherine,

dressed, looked, and spoke to please and captivate him. Even the elegant, refined, and graceful Marguerite allowed his influence, and permitted her taste to be in a great degree regulated by his. Her condescension in this respect had given rise to hints that the distinguished courtier was not indifferent to the Princess who delighted so much in his society, and this reputation not a little enhanced his value amongst his associates, nor did his vanity fail to turn the supposition to the best account.

The epithet which he had acquired of *Le Baladin de la Cour*, had not raised him much in the estimation of sober-minded persons, and he was looked upon by the better part of the community as the very impersonation of profligacy and effeminacy.

This accomplished ornament of the most unprincipled court in Europe was now carelessly sauntering on in the train of the Queen-mother, carefully avoiding any indication of interest in the ceremonial which absorbed all attention, but looking from side to side with an air of profound indifference, occasionally lifting from his side, where it depended, a small mirror in a gold frame, which, though till lately an appendage of the female toilet, he had newly introduced as an ornament amongst the fops of the

period. His attire bespoke the utmost care and consideration, and proclaimed the high importance attached to his character; the most faultless propriety reigned throughout, and the ensemble was so perfect and so inimitable that no one portion of the elaborate finish shone out more conspicuously than the rest. In his ears he wore rings of rubies, with drops of pearl; his hair was curled, turned back, and fastened with combs; the hat he negligently held was adorned with an aigrette of diamonds, and from the front hung over the forehead, when worn, a profusion of little ornaments in a fringe of various-coloured gems, which shook at every movement of the head. His beard was long and pointed,—a mode very dear to him, as he was conscious of the peculiarly fine growth of that imposing appendage, — in which particular, as some of the nobles could not vie with him, a few followed the example of Henry of Anjou, whose beard was worn short, and whose hair was dyed of whatever colour pleased him for the time. On his white uncovered hand sparkled numerous small rings, from which, as he occasionally waved his fringed handkerchief, or pointed to some object, a stream of odour issued, the hollows of each ring being filled with musk. His short mantle was of rich silk, gorgeously em-

broidered in an antique pattern of gold and jewels, with devices and mottos intermixed with its scrolls and foliage; his throat displayed a necklace of pearls, with clasps of sapphire surrounded by sparks of diamonds: a high transparent ruff shaded the back of his neck, and a double collar of the same light texture, covered with delicate work, fell on his shoulders. His nether garments were of cloth of gold, the seams and slashes sprinkled and edged with small buttons of jewels of every hue; large bouquets of pearls in his shoes, completed his sparkling costume. His remarkably handsome person, added to the ease and grace with which he wore this profusion of ornament, rendered him the most dazzling and magnificent figure in the procession.

The first glance which he cast on Alix arrested his attention. Her youth, her extreme beauty, and a dignified yet mournful expression in her countenance, very different from all around her, whose faces were lighted up with smiles of pleasure, altogether riveted his admiration.

"God of love!" said he to Count Coconnas, his companion, "observe yonder deity of beauty; what butterfly just escaped from its confinement has spread its wings with so much

glory ! it should flutter only in a great man's garden. She is the very personification of Ronsard's description—

“ Amour, jeunesse et les graces qui sont  
Filles du ciel lui pendoient sur le front,  
Mais ce que plus redoubla mon service  
C'est qu'elle avait un visage sans art ! ”

The Count Coconnas languidly turned his eyes towards her. “ Do you mean that pale beauty who looks scared at the regards of the Queen ? ” asked he. “ Methinks you desire to be singular on this occasion. I see hundreds round more worthy of our gaze, — if, indeed, there is anything in this fading world which should claim a moment's notice from the eye of taste. The Duchess of Nevers becomes her high plume well—'tis a fashion exquisitely devised for a majestic stature. What a complexion she has !—

“ Jeune déesse au teint vermeil ? ”

He uttered this compliment loud enough to be heard by her to whom it was addressed. The Duchess, at that moment, dropped the bigotelle which held her fan, and Coconnas instantly hastened to present it to her, whispering, as he restored it, a thousand agreeable nothings, which were listened to with gratified vanity.

La Mole, meantime, continued to gaze on Alix, who, all unconscious of his admiration, was entirely engrossed in reflection on the effrontery of Bianco, and the haughty yet familiar glance of the Queen-mother. The train moved on, and La Mole among the rest, without either Claude or herself being aware of the impression her beauty had made. At this moment Claude would have given his existence to approach her, to support her drooping form, to whisper consolation to her wounded spirit. The truth, which he had long striven to conceal from himself, rushed with violence on his mind, and told him that from the moment he had first beheld her, his peace was resigned to the keeping of the beautiful Alix. "Alas! vain hope,—vain conviction! Who am I," he exclaimed mentally, "that I should dare to love her? Am I not unknown, — undistinguished? — one on whom she has never condescended to bestow a thought, except a transient one of obligation, the very existence of which precludes a tenderer sentiment. We are widely,—fatally separated. Oh, that we had never met! Why did a star of such loveliness illumine my sky for a moment, only to render my future night more dismal?"

He withdrew his gaze from the face of Alix, and with feelings of unutterable despondency

sunk back against the pillar near which he had shrouded himself, and waited with the apathy of wretchedness till the ceremonies should be concluded, and he could indulge in silence and solitude the tears which he was obliged to suppress.

There was more wretchedness in that gorgeous assemblage than the delighted and admiring lookers-on dreamt of: there were fear, regret, disappointment, mortification, and despair; — uneasy, ambitious thoughts, and cruel designs, deceit, and treachery, and wickedness. All the principal actors in the scene were disturbed with images “which had no business there at such a time.” The beautiful Marguerite stood at the altar blazing in splendour, and eclipsing all in charms, but her bridegroom’s heart was far away; it was in the tomb with his beloved mother, whom in his affections no other could replace. The Princess wore a regal crown covered with jewels of great price; her own rich dark hair, contrary to the usual fashion of the day, was arranged in long ringlets, and floated over her shoulders, on which an ermine cape of state was thrown, whose rounded ends descended to her waist in front, and were fastened with clasps of large diamonds. Her flowing train of violet velvet, strewn with fleurs-de-lis, was supported by three princesses of



royal blood; her robe was of white cloth of silver, studded with fleurs-de-lis of pearls and other jewels. Nothing could exceed the richness and costliness of her appearance, but her countenance was at variance with the display: her brow was contracted, her cheek flushed, and her carriage haughty and unbending. She went through the ceremony with a cold and unmoved endurance; and so indifferent did she appear to what was expected of her, that when she was required to respond to the demand of the Cardinal-priest, her brother, King Charles, observing that she remained silent, placed his hand at the back of her head, and bent it down in sign of assent. The unhappy Marie de Cleves, pale as marble, and stupified with grief, was supported on all sides by her friends, who in vain endeavoured to conceal the state in which they found her. Her bridegroom, with averted looks, appeared unconscious of the repugnance she exhibited, and was only roused from his apparent reverie by observing that, as the service ended which made her his wife, she had fainted in the arms of her sister, the Duchess de Nevers.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE SUPPER AT COURT.

*Sledge.* Forks ?—what be they ?

*Meercraft.* The laudable use of forks  
Brought into custom here as they 're in Italy,  
To the sparing of napkins.

*Ben Jonson's Devil's an Ass.*

THE citizens of Paris, and all the lovers of order, now began to look forward to quiet days and a restoration of that peace of which the contentions of party had too long deprived them. They saw before them a bright vista of prosperity, confidence restored, and good understanding secured, and they blessed the union which had bestowed peace on all. The turbulence of the Guises was lulled to rest, the restless Huguenots were appeased, and the court party was satisfied. This was the outward appearance that things wore,—within the palace of the Louvre a far different aspect reigned: to that retreat had slunk the very spirit of destruction

whose ministers were secretly at work upon a deed as hideous as unexpected.

Although the high-priestess of mischief, Catherine, intended that Charles should be a principal tool in the act she meditated, yet she was too well aware of his vacillating disposition, to entrust him fully with her plans.

The murder of the Admiral de Coligni had been agreed upon, in solemn conclave, between de Retz her minion, the Duke de Guise, and herself, yet the King was left in ignorance of their designs concerning him. He knew that the great object of their policy was to collect together in one focus all the leaders of the Protestant party, and he hailed the success of that scheme with exultation, feeling that, once in their power, much might be done to overreach and humble them; but he had not contemplated the great stroke of policy which should annihilate the whole power at one blow. His excited and weak mind could not fix itself to any particular point — visions of imprisonment, trial, attainder, and probably death, floated in his imagination, and he looked with complacency on such a fate prepared for his Protestant subjects. The death of the Queen of Navarre had surprised him, and his suspicions pointed to his mother as the cause; but he

asked no questions: the undisguised grief of his nurse considerably shook his nerves, and awakened a train of thought anything but soothing. Weak in health at all times, the excitement of the last few weeks had greatly irritated and increased his complaints, and his brain was heated in so fearful a manner that Mabilie feared for his reason, and would fain have prevented his attending to business or receiving the visits of his mother, which never failed to bring on a return of the symptoms she dreaded. He had become of late extremely jealous of his authority, and at times even openly proclaimed his resolution to cast off the yoke imposed on him by Catherine and her partisans: but his determination always quailed before her superior art and firmness, and expended itself in fretful demonstrations of anger and discontent. His envy of his brother Anjou had also, of late, grown into a malady, and the sight of him had become as odious as it appeared satisfactory to the Queen-mother. Naturally cruel and revengeful, and possessed of a large share of cunning and deceit, still, at times, it appeared as if glimpses of a better nature shone through his evil propensities, which, had they been fostered, might have neutralized the bad qualities ordinarily so much more prominent. There were

moments when he listened to the mild advice and gentle admonitions of Mabilie with patience, and would then form benevolent plans for the relief of the persecuted followers of what was at that time called "*the Religion*:" then he would shudder at the recollection of his mother's counsels, and her hard, cold, cruel, policy would inspire him with horror. As long as he heard only of merciful and gentle means, his mind embraced them; but unfortunately, one hour of association with the resolute and remorseless could change the whole current of his ideas, and make him the instrument they required.

He was found in one of his most conciliatory moods by the Admiral de Coligni, immediately after the marriage of his sister was concluded; and the conversation having been led to the persecutions suffered by the Protestants in the Low Countries, Coligni urged the necessity of measures being taken for their protection: the King listened with great apparent sympathy, and entreated the Admiral to take upon himself the direction of all arrangements requisite, and to succour them to the extent of his power.

"But," said he, "my father," thus he was in the habit of addressing Coligni when in good temper, "there is one thing of which we must be cautious. My mother suspects that I am

inclined to the cause,—you know her shifting policy; now she is the friend, and now the enemy of the Huguenots. I am firm, and nothing shall make me swerve from my determination to do them justice and extend towards them paternal succour. But, remember, we must not let her thrust herself into our councils; let her, at least, be only half aware of our intentions, or she will spoil all.”

“But, sire,” said the high-minded Admiral, “why should we conceal from that wise princess plans, in which her experience and foresight might aid us. She is ever zealous for the good of the state, and I need scarcely remark to your grace what an exemplary mother she has always proved herself.”

“Psha!” said Charles, peevishly, “you talk without knowing of whom you speak; my mother is the most dangerous of women; the most deceitful and designing, and, depend upon it, the most accomplished marplot in the world.”

The Admiral was silent, surprised and distressed by this irreverent language, and endeavoured to change the subject. “Ah!” said Charles, turning to M. de Teligni, who was standing near, “I see the Admiral is shocked at my plain speaking; he does not like sincerity. Shall I confess the truth to you? I feel that I

have none about me whom I can trust. Tavannes is given up to ambition; Vieilleville loves nothing but good cheer; Cossé is a mere miser; De Montmorency is a slave to the pleasures of hunting and hawking; De Retz, — when I say he is a Spaniard, I say everything; whatever merits my mother may see in him are lost upon me. As for my mother, herself," added he, laughing, "you know the proverb,—the Italian cheats the Spaniard, and the Florentine all other Italians; but see, Coligni frowns again, so we will say nothing of her. For the rest, all the lords of my council are fools, my secretaries of state, arrant knaves. I have plenty of advisers who urge me for their own ends, and not for the benefit of myself or my people; but where are my friends? I have no friends. I turn from side to side, and I see no way of escape from the position in which I stand.

"Declare yourself openly the friend of the Protestants, sire," said Coligni boldly. "Be just—be generous; follow the noble promptings of your heart; be guided by none of those of whom you disapprove, but act, and be indeed, a father and a king!"

"I will!" said Charles with animation; "I will have no interference. Give me but a few

days, Admiral; you will see if Charles can be a king, or if he is to be for ever crushed and overwhelmed by the power of others."

Having thus spoken, as if he already feared that he had said too much, he relapsed into silence, and appearing exhausted and unwell, the noblemen took their leave; not, however, without renewed expressions of esteem and regard for their sovereign, and assurances on his part of good faith and zeal in their cause.

As the Admiral descended the steps of the palace to mount his horse, he could not help saying to his friends, "The King means us well. We are fortunate in having so true an ally."

"My lord," said one who was near him, bluntly, "I am sorry to hear you say so."

"How! Blosset," answered the Admiral, "why should you regret to hear good news?"

"Admiral," replied the Captain, "I have fought much against the Catholics, whom I think excellent enemies, and should not be sorry to meet them on that ground again; but, for friends, I confess I like them so little, that I mean to rid myself of their society at once, and this very day am about to set out for



Burgundy. I counsel you and all your friends to follow my good example. Depend upon it, it would be for the health of all."

"But why, Captain," asked Coligni, "should you leave the capital now, just when we are on the very pinnacle of content, with the King our good friend?"

"He is too good!" interrupted Blosset. "These demonstrations of his friendship have determined me. How kind he is to surround us with his Swiss guard!—to show us honour by so many troops entering Paris! Let us all thank him at a distance; and in the meantime take care of ourselves. Follow my advice, Admiral: quit this city without delay. Not another hour sees Captain Blosset within its walls." So saying the Burgundian spurred his steed, and turning once more to wave his hand to Coligni, disappeared.

A series of entertainments was announced in all the palaces of Paris in honour of the propitious nuptials which had just taken place. Night and day nothing was to be heard of but rejoicing and festivity, and it seemed as if the business of everyday-life would never be resumed. Amongst the most curious and conspicuous of these fêtes was one, the features of which were so peculiar as to deserve mention.

The evening's pastime began with a grand ball given by King Charles to the newly married pair, and to all the great officers of state, and chief magistrates of the city. After dancing was ended, a ponderous masque commenced, in which most of the royal party bore a share. First appeared on the scene, moved by machinery, four enormous rocks, silvered over, where marine gods were seated, bearing various instruments of music, on which they played with infinite skill. As these disappeared others advanced, varied by representations of mermaids, dolphins, and other strange creatures reclining amidst bowers of coral and seaweed, shells and pearls. On the highest of these moving rocks appeared beneath a canopy supported by silver pillars a god of the sea, personated by the celebrated singer Estienne le Roy, looked upon at that time as the very greatest of all artists, whose melodious voice enchanted all hearers, and who poured forth from his exalted position a flood of music capable of melting the rock on which he sat, if the enthusiastic encomiums lavished upon him by the fashionable audience assembled were to be believed. After these animated mountains had removed themselves, came a splendid gilded chariot drawn by sea-horses, on which other

marine animals of large dimensions appeared to sport, holding in the folds of their wreathed tails an immense shell of gold, within which sat enthroned Neptune, presented by King Charles himself, holding his trident, and guiding his aquatic subjects by means of glittering reins. Other cars of a similar description next appeared; and the prince-gods within them, descending to earth, each selected a lady, and with her trod the mazes of a dance, whose grace and beauty was admired and applauded beyond all the wonders which had preceded it.

The supper which followed was hailed, both by the actors and spectators, with infinite satisfaction; and even the fastidious taste of the great critic of fashion, La Mole, was almost satisfied with the elegant arrangement of the tables, on which appeared the enamelled dishes of Limoges, holding meats of the most exquisite description. Vases of wrought gold and painted cups, the sculptures and figures of which proclaimed by their beauty the hands of the great masters Palizzi and Celini; saltcellars by the same wondrous artists, and carved and richly-ornamented knives; spoons of ivory, whose handles were worked in transparent patterns, as if spiders or fairies had fabricated them; and the newly-introduced two-pronged

fork, against the effeminacy of using which the preachers of the day inveighed with great bitterness,—all were of the most costly and admirable description. The finest wines were in profusion, and due justice was done to the sparkling vin d'Arbois and the clarette, all the respective merits acknowledged of the vintage of Bar, St. Pourcain, Loire, St. Jangon, Galar-don, Grenache, and all the infinite variety of muscadins, which were peculiarly appreciated by the fair guests who partook of them.

“It cannot be denied,” said La Mole to a friend, “that this entertainment is as well arranged as it is possible for so heavy and crowded an affair to be. There is, however, no real elegance to be found at royal tables; all is gorgeous, all is on a magnificent scale: true refinement can only be attained in a small space, where every object that meets the eye can be attended to, and where no one discrepancy shall shock and irritate the feelings. I mean shortly to give a small—a very small entertainment, to a select few of the princesses, and will show them what these things should be; rather in order to induce them to follow a virtuous example, and so manage that I may not be annoyed by displays of gross grandeur, than with a view to their pleasure; for, to tell truth, except

the Lady Marguerite herself, and a few others, I hold them little worthy to appreciate my taste."

Those courtiers who held La Mole to be their master and oracle in matters of elegance, of course from the moment he had spoken thus, looked with a pitying eye upon all the glories which wooed their approbation, and the whole aim of their existence henceforth seemed to be to attain the distinction of an invitation to the fête in perspective: they were careful, therefore, of words, looks, and actions, lest, offending by a shade of rusticity his sensitive feelings, they should lose the envied distinction which would at once stamp their character for fashion with immortal fame.

The supper ended, a most mysterious and extraordinary species of amusement was introduced in the shape of a drama, in which Charles the Ninth and his brothers sustained the principal parts. The object of it seemed inscrutable and its policy appeared more than doubtful, as it was calculated to alarm those whom it was the interest of the court to lull into security.

The scenes represented were Paradise and the Infernal regions, with contending knights, who, being overcome by the royal champions, were driven from the gardens of Delight into

the abode of darkness. No one could explain the allegory, and so full of horror did it appear, that few but those engaged in the performance seemed to receive any satisfaction regarding it; and on the breaking up of the pageant, a general gloom seemed to have overspread the place. The guests dispersed, and the former gaiety and enjoyment of the night was effaced from the minds of all, leaving a vague terror and an unpleasant remembrance in their stead.

The next day the lists were prepared in the great court of the Louvre for a match of running at the ring. Many of the young knights were extremely desirous that a tournament should take place, but the Queen-mother's repugnance to it was so great, that the idea was reluctantly relinquished. Since the period of her husband's death she could not endure pastimes of the kind, and they had been consequently banished entirely from France. A gallery, richly ornamented and hung with cloth of gold, was arranged for the ladies, and there assembled all the beauties of the court to witness the spectacle. The King and the Duke of Anjou appeared in a costume which excited some astonishment, and the taste of which was thought questionable: the Duke de Guise and the Chevalier d'Angoulême, natural son of the late King,

adopted the same costume, which was that of Amazons. The King of Navarre and a large body of his friends were dressed as Turks, with robes of cloth of gold and rich turbans; the Prince of Condé and the young de Rochefoucault as Greek warriors, and all their friends and attendants in different fantastic garbs. It was remarked, that in spite of all the splendour attending this solemnity, the usual gaiety did not prevail. Every one remarked the absence of the Mareschal de Montmorency, who had excused himself from joining the fête, and had retired to his country-house out of Paris; and neither the Admiral nor many of his people were there. After there had been a few courses, the King was drawn aside by some of his party, who communicated to him, that in the Pré aux Clercs had been remarked that morning a concourse of persons mounted, who paraded about without any apparent cause; also, that in many of the places in Paris people assembled wearing pistols, carrying arquebusses and other weapons, contrary to the express command issued that no arms should be borne during the festivities. The Prevôt de Paris, Nantouillet, who had been an invited guest, and was a man of great pomposity and ostentation, bustled about with infi-

nite zeal, and came forward to assure the King that every precaution should be taken to prevent any disturbance.

"But, your Grace," said he, "we are all in so happy a state of peace and bliss at this moment, thanks to your Grace's wise government, that we need fear nothing. The young King of Navarre's followers are so orderly and well-behaved, that I really think it would be difficult to create any annoyance in Paris at this propitious period, he is so much beloved; and as for the fair young Princess Marguerite, the sight of her is enough to repress disorder. Every one hopes to see her one day Queen of France;—she has, indeed, the presence of a Queen!"

Pleased at his own clever manner of conveying a compliment, the Prevôt did not observe the impression his last allusion had made on the King, whose countenance fell, as with some bitterness, which was, however, unheeded by the satisfied Prevôt, he replied:—"I thank you for your friendly wishes, Nantouillet, and it shall go hard but before long we show you a few of our court manners in the city, and prove that we deserve all your civilities. Truly, we may take some hints in courtesy, which we



will not be slow to follow. They tell me your hotel on the Quai de la Vallée is very magnificent."

"Oh! sire," returned the Prevôt, his large fat face becoming scarlet with excitement, while he looked round proudly towards several of the échevins and the Prevôt des Marchands who stood near, "if your Grace would deign to honour me with judging for yourself, my hotel would in future justly deserve its reputation of illustrious. Though it may not become me to say so, I *do* profess that a larger, finer, better built house than the Hôtel d'Hercule does not exist in Paris.—Ay, your Grace, and the cellars are not badly stored either, nor is the larder ill-supplied!"

"Well, good Nantouillet," said the King, with a significant glance at his brother Anjou, "we will pay you a visit in form, and beware that we find not your boast vain, for we will do justice to all we find."

The elated city dignitary strutted away with great delight to communicate to his envying friends the distinguished honour which had been shown him, and his brain began instantly working to devise a fitting entertainment for his royal and noble guest.

He found Charron, the new Prevôt des Mar-

chands, and his predecessor, Marcel, in close conversation with some of the party of Guise, by whom an appointment was made from their chief to meet him at his hotel immediately on the games being finished. These two worthies, equally gratified at the marked consideration shown them, heard with less vexation of the glory which had fallen on Nantouillet, and they all agreed that a period was at length arrived when the superior consequence of the city was properly acknowledged.

As it was growing late, and another banquet and ballet were to be held that night, the King broke up the amusement sooner than usual, appointing its continuance next day, when he proposed their meeting again to continue the sport.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE SIBYLS.

Deserted, say'st thou, for a girl abandoned,  
A puny girl made up of wa'ry elements !—LEE.

ON returning to his hotel that night from the Louvre, the Admiral de Coligni was much struck with the appearance of the streets. Numerous bodies of troops were constantly to be met with arriving from the country in all directions, and filling every avenue. This appeared singular and unnecessary, when all was peace and good-understanding between the parties ; and it was with spirits considerably depressed that the Admiral reached his home and his closet, where he gave himself up to musings of a somewhat sad though undefined nature. He was interrupted by the entrance of Labonne, his chief attendant, informing him that a man below desired to be admitted to him.

“ What man at this early hour of morning can seek me ? ” said Coligni.

"It is one in the garb of a monk of the Cordeliers," was the answer. "He says his business is most pressing."

"Admit him," returned the Admiral, after a short pause. "I have letters to write: take him into the hall and let him wait till I summon you again. Give me my papers."

So saying, the Admiral seated himself to indite that last letter to his wife, which she received at the same time with the news of his murder. The letter ran thus:—

"MY DEAREST AND BEST BELOVED,

"The marriage of the King of Navarre with the sister of the King is accomplished. Nothing is thought of, *nor will be for some time*, but feasts, balls, and rejoicings, combats, masques, and ballets. The King assures me, after all this gaiety is past, that he will see me seriously on the subject of the troubles, and listen patiently to all the complaints which have reached me respecting this violation of the edict of pacification. I have every reason to occupy myself about this as much and as soon as possible; for besides, dearest love, that I am most anxious to behold you who are so dear to me, I know well, and appreciate your motives, that I should fall into disgrace with

you if I should fail to interest myself in this important affair, and that it were not to my honour if evil were to come to our cause in consequence of my negligence. I cannot but regret the delay which all this festivity occasions, as it must retard my departure from this place, for I cannot hope to be permitted to leave it *till next week*. If I could consider only my own inclination and convenience, how much should I prefer being with you to staying here ; but, for the reasons I have given, I cannot help myself for the present ; and the good of the public of course must be considered rather than a private interest. I have many things to tell you, but I defer them till we meet ;—night and day, my beloved wife, to do so is the object of my desires. You shall then hear all the particulars of this happy marriage ; how the mass for the bride was celebrated, and during the time it was going on the bridegroom, and his friends of our religion, walked about in a separate part of the cathedral. Some things I can tell will amuse you much ; but I must leave them now. Adieu, then, my very dearly loved wife. I pray God that he will keep you in his holy charge !

*“ Paris, 18 August, 1572.”*

The Admiral before he sealed his letter, unwilling to tear himself from an occupation so soothing and so delightful, added the following words, knowing the anxiety of his wife respecting his health :

“ For three days past I have been incommoded with violent pain in my chest and stomach, sometimes extremely distressing. The Queen-mother has, however, sent me, through a famous chemist whom she employs,—an Italian of great skill,—a remedy which has already relieved me, and I intend to go on with it if this malady continues, which I do not imagine will be the case.

“ Believe me, dearest love, that during all these pastimes and amusements, I shall be most careful to offend no one, nor to forget you,—nor, above all, God.

“ Your faithful husband,

“ CHASTILLON.”

Reluctantly he closed his letter, having kissed it with affection, and calling his page, desired that the Cordelier should be admitted. A tall man, muffled in a cowl, was ushered into the chamber, who stood for some moments

silent, as the Admiral, motioning him to be seated, inquired his business.

"Coligni," said the stranger, solemnly, "my business is of life and death. Attend to what I have to disclose, for much depends on it."

"If," said Coligni, "you are come, good father, to preach to me of your religion, save your time and mine; and know that, however for political reasons I appear to conform and to endure all that is forced upon my approval in the Catholic faith, you have no chance of making a proselyte of a determined Huguenot, and an old soldier like myself. Too many have tried it, and it is but trifling to attempt my conversion."

He spoke this in a gay tone, anxious at once to rid himself of his gloomy-looking guest, who, however, advancing to him, caught his arm, and throwing back his cowl, exclaimed,

"Admiral! ever incautious and unsuspecting as you are, what should have prevented me from acting as at this moment every Catholic in Paris is ready to do?—Why should not a stranger, admitted without question to an unarmed man, have a dagger concealed to rid himself and his party of an enemy?"

"Montgomery!" exclaimed Coligni, "who talks of imprudence? Had not I myself advised

you to avoid the court of Catherine, whose enmity is not subdued against you? and did you not promise to await at La Rochelle the news I was to send you?"

"True," answered Montgomery. "But a stronger feeling than prudence drew me here,—a hope which has long lain dormant in my breast, but which circumstances have of late revived. On my arrival in Paris, I sought the concealment of an obscure quarter of the town, where, since the arrival of the Court from Blois, I have been hidden. In the disguise in which you see me, I have contrived to learn much more than can be known in your position. I lodge at the house of a goldsmith called Mathurin Lussaut, a Catholic, but an honest man, who believes me to have arrived from Lyons on business for my convent; and from those who frequent his house, and that of an innkeeper close by in the Rue St. Jacques, I hear much of import to our cause. Be warned in time. I have lost no opportunity of putting all of our party I could reach on their guard: some few have listened to my advice, but a fearful security seems to prevail. I endeavoured to save Queen Jeanne, but she was convinced too late: let it not be the same with you!"

"De Lorges," replied the Admiral calmly,



“you, and many of our party, do the King injustice: he means us well. I have his solemn assurances that he will treat all his Protestant subjects as his children. This marriage has secured all. It were unwise to doubt,—it were impolitic to show distrust. Whatever may be the secret feelings or wishes of Catherine, Charles is our friend, and his power can protect us. They are now so closely linked with us, that to injure one of our party is to dis sever the chain that holds us all in safety.”

“My friend,” answered Montgomery, “your honest heart leads you to believe that all around you are noble as yourself. This marriage, though a bold step, is but a blind for dangerous designs. Catherine is capable of the deepest malice,—the most fearful cruelty; she has sworn to exterminate the Protestants, and she will keep her vow, though it cost her the lives of half her Catholic friends to accomplish.”

“You have, I know, too much reason,” said Coligni, “to fear and to distrust her.”

“You know not half the cause I have,” exclaimed de Lorges, passionately, — “you only know of the enmity, the persecution, the bitter vengeance with which she has pursued me and mine, from the period when my lance, guided by evil chance alone, entered the brain of the

unfortunate King Henry. You know my wife and child died after my banishment; but you know not how! oh, my Agnes! my murdered love!" he cried, clasping his hands in agony, "she who could sacrifice such purity and beauty as thine, is capable of any crime! Listen, and let me recount to you a story which should warn you against trusting to one whose soul knows no touch of human feeling.

"You are aware of the state of dependence and constraint in which Queen Catherine lived from the period of her marriage with Henry II, while the favourite Diana held that place which belonged of right to the wife of the King; many of those about Court, who saw this, felt interested for the young Queen, whose daily mortifications excited pity and sympathy. At that time I was constantly in her society, and the mildness and amiability of her manners, soft, gentle, and unassuming, and the patience with which she bore her wrongs, caused me to look upon her with compassion and admiration. I was very far from imagining that the friendly interest I did not endeavour to conceal from her, had given rise in her breast, to emotions which I had no wish and no intention of calling into existence. I was distinguished by her husband with honour, and named her knight in

most of the jousts and tournaments which were, unfortunately for me, then so much the mode. Her taste for magnificence and extravagance was encouraged by Henry, who, although he had no regard whatever towards her, did not deny her anything which might amuse and console her for all she could not aspire to. She was crowned at St. Denis with a splendour, till then almost unheard of, having been permitted to arrange all the ceremonial after her own wish, and there was scarcely a ball at Court which her taste did not direct. At one of these fêtes, given to the King, on occasion of his return from Germany, she had composed a ballet in which six young beauties habited as Sibyls, were each to recite some verses addressed to him. The ballet was danced by Madame Elizabeth, her beautiful daughter, whose tragical fate soon followed her marriage with Philip of Spain; the lovely Marie Stuart, of Scotland, the fair Princess Claude, Clarice Strozzi, Mary Fleming, and a young girl who had never before appeared at Court, and had left her convent only a short time, to be received into that dangerous and enchanting place, by her royal kinswoman. This was Agnes de la Tour, — one of the sweetest, most perfect, and most unfortunate of her sex. To see her, was to adore her,

and to hear her voice was to be bound in a spell for ever. She represented the Sibyl Erytrée, (alas! how often I used to call her by that name!) and her part was to advance towards the Princess Marguerite, then on the eve of marriage with the Duke of Savoy, and in a tone of the most musical sweetness she delivered these lines:—

Le beau rivage, où mon surnom j'ai pris,  
Ne produit point de perles de tel prix  
Que vous, unique et claire Marguerite,  
Qui voyez tout dessous votre mérite.  
Heureux trois fois et plus sera le roi  
Que vos vertus vous promettent — et moi !

“From that moment my heart was entirely her own, and my passion was returned — this is the only happiness I have known — forgive me for dwelling on its dawn,—overcast so soon! Birth, age, fortune, all favoured our attachment, which was first discovered by the King himself, who, happy in the power of rewarding my services and attachment, saw our mutual love with satisfaction. He sent me, on the day when I confessed to him that his suspicions were well founded, a lance, with a message desiring me to use it in my future combats to maintain the supremacy of my fair mistress, dispensing me from that time from the duty of being the Queen's champion, whom I had hitherto so

loyally served. His jesting words were remarkable, although at the time I little heeded them. 'Use this lance,' he wrote, 'dear Montgomery, against the enemies of your fair lady—you need never fear that your King will be one. May the torch of Hymen be more fortunate to you than that with which your father nearly burnt mine, at Blois.' Mysterious fate! it was with that lance I killed him!

"The evening of that day Catherine sent for me. I found her alone in her closet. Her usually calm countenance was pale and haggard, her eyes fierce and wandering, and the whole expression of her face so changed that I could scarcely recognise her. In a hoarse and troubled voice she addressed me,—

"'De Lorges,'" she said, "'the King has told me that which I find it impossible to believe. I cannot think you so base as to have given cause for his surmise. I am informed that you seek in marriage, Agnes de la Tour, my kinswoman?'

"Madam," I answered, confused by her extraordinary manner, "our attachment has not then been observed by your grace?"

"'Ha!'" exclaimed she, violently, interrupting me, 'you dare then to confess it, you dare to tell me to my face that I am contemned;

despised, neglected, cast off for a child, an infant who can compare with me no more than Juno to a slave! you have deceived—undone me!’

“‘What mean these words?’ I cried in amazement. ‘How have I offended your Grace—what have I done to cause this undeserved anger? You whom I honour, reverence, and respect; whom I would defend with my last breath, and against whom none shall dare to utter a thought disloyal, while I have an arm to use in your service.’

“‘Hold, miscreant!’ cried Catherine, her eyes flashing with indignation: ‘drive me not quite mad with this cold cunning, which deceives me not. You know—you have long known the passion I felt for you: my station, my honour, my danger,—nothing could subdue it; and I find too late that I have been played on,—treated with contempt, and made the sport of two ungrateful wretches, who triumph in my shame and my despair. Reply not. You have my secret: may it prove a curse to you! I have loved once; and henceforth my whole life shall be hate. Beware of my revenge! Be secret, and begone!’

“She waved her hand imperiously, and I left her chamber, stupified with amazement and sorrow; indignant at myself, and at the

folly which had for so long a time permitted a veil to remain before my eyes, and concealed from me the real nature of the Queen's friendship. My absorbing love for Agnes made it impossible for me to observe anything but herself; and the esteem in which I had hitherto held Catherine, naturally precluded all thought that her numerous favours and marks of distinction meant more than they professed to do.

“ After a night of great anxiety, I prepared myself to endure as I best might the unjust indignation of the Queen, and my only anxiety was lest her anger should fall upon my innocent Agnes. My surprise was therefore great on finding that no further notice was taken by Catherine of the affair. Her former serenity had returned: she treated me in her usual manner before others, and the only difference was that I never saw her alone. She delighted extremely at this time in an Italian musician, very skilful on the guitar, whom she engaged to give lessons to Agnes, whose voice was extremely fine, and who soon attained great perfection on this instrument. Far from showing any coldness to her, her attentions and kindness appeared to be redoubled, and frequently she would summon me to join the concert when Florio and Mademoiselle de la Tour sang for

her amusement. Soon after, she herself announced to me that the King had ordered everything for our nuptials, which she intended should be very splendid, and would, herself, compose a ballet for the occasion. She appeared to have entirely forgiven and forgotten her disappointment, and to have allowed reason and modesty to resume their sway.

“ I was married to Agnes de la Tour, and my happiness was rendered complete by the birth of a son: during all this period we met with nothing but kindness and consideration from the Queen, for the time of her vengeance was not arrived; but it was coming fast, and overtook us when we were secure.

“ The days of the fatal tournament arrived; the last morning my Agnes complained of indisposition, and was unable to accompany the rest of the ladies to witness the jousting. I left her with regret, and so dispirited was I, that I endeavoured to excuse myself from joining the combatants, but in vain; my unfortunate renown in various feats of arms, and my success on the preceding days, had piqued the King, who was resolved to engage with me hand to hand, and jestingly desired me to bring the lance he had sent me on the occasion of his discovery of my love. Catherine, by her favourite Florio, on



learning of my wife's illness, sent me a potion, desiring that I should administer it myself, as it was a sovereign remedy. Just before I left her for the last time, I entreated her to take this, and having poured it, myself, into a cup, I stood to see her drink it, and having embraced her hurried away. The dreadful result of that day's pastime all France knows too well,—the King fell, and I saw my ruin. I rushed to my wife's apartments, resolving to lose no time, but to fly instantly with her and my child till the truth should be made manifest, and the excited minds of men became calmed.

“What was my horror to find my adored Agnes a pale and livid corpse, in the spot where I had left her—poisoned by the very draught I had myself given her! My despair knew no bounds; regardless of my own danger, I resolved to remain and perish with her, but the thought of our child changed the current of my thoughts. While I indulged in vain exclamations of grief, several of my friends rushed into the apartment, and used every argument to induce me to fly for my own and for my infant's sake. ‘The Queen,’ they said, ‘has given orders that you shall be instantly secured, and already the guards are on their way to take you; there is no safety but in immediate flight, while the

confusion is still at its height; confide in us, your child shall be cared for, and we pledge ourselves for its security.' The brother of my murdered wife assured me that he would take care that my son should be sent to Anthony of Navarre, my beloved friend and brother in arms. I insisted on carrying him off myself; but they represented that at the infant's tender age to expose it to such danger was certain destruction. I kissed the unconscious creature a thousand times, and left him in the arms of one who had proved herself a faithful friend to my Agnes, and who was the nurse of Prince Charles. She swore to me, that never would she part with that child, while she had life, until she had seen it placed in security. I fled,—and what my life has since been I need not relate to you; a series of struggles and dangers. I married again in England, where my children now are, thank Heaven, safe, under the protection of Elizabeth; but no tidings have I ever had of my first-born son, the son of my lost Agnes. In the vain hope of discovering some traces of his fate I came to Paris after this long lapse of years, and have managed to obtain an interview with Mabile, who still holds her place about the person of Charles. From her my worst fears are confirmed. After I had

quitted the fatal spot, Mabile, without loss of time, hurried to her own house, and confiding the infant to her husband returned quickly to the palace before her absence was observed. Scarcely had she resumed her place beside the couch of the young Prince, when Catherine entered, with expressions of rage and malignity, commanding that my child should be instantly conveyed to her, and, on discovering that it was nowhere to be found, she caused search to be made wherever I had friends or kindred. She did not suspect Mabile, who found an early occasion for despatching her husband with the precious charge, and who, under cover of his merchandise, was to convey my son to Bearn, where the King of Navarre's protection was certain to await him. He quitted Paris, and was never more heard of! What became of him or of my son, Mabile never heard, and no clue is left by which to learn their fate. Catherine's vengeance might have aided our researches, for she left nothing untried to discover what friend had removed him from her power. My possessions were all confiscated, my houses destroyed, and my name branded with infamy; but I have found another country and another home, and little heed her vindictive malice. You may, however, judge,

Admiral, how dangerous a friend she is, and how fatal to those who trust her. I must, if possible, see Mabile once more, and then will leave Paris never to return. Neglect not my counsel, but fly with me ; De Montmorency has already retired to Chantilly with his followers ; he doubts, and is resolved to be prepared for the treachery which is lurking round us all. This very night I depart."

"De Lorges," said Coligni, "your recital has made a deep impression on me, and I will indeed reflect on all you advise. As soon as morning dawns, I will seek the King once more, and should I see reason to fear I will hesitate no longer."

The friends then parted, and Montgomery, unmarked in his disguise, returned to his retreat in the Rue St. Jacques, while the Admiral prepared to visit King Charles.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE CORDELIER.

Les bons et vrais dévots qu'on doit suivre à la trace  
Ne sont pas ceux aussi qui font tant de grimace.  
Hé, quoi ! vous ne ferez nulle distinction  
Entre l'hypocrisie et la dévotion ?

*Molière.*

MATHURIN Lussaut the gold-wire drawer and his pretty wife, Clarice, of whose beauty he was very proud, as well as of his own remarkably handsome head and long curling hair, were at the door of their shop, the sign of the Miroir d'or, and complacently looking up at that brilliant appendage, whose burnished glories flashed in the sun and raised the envy of their less brilliant neighbours, who, having mostly been longer married and longer residents in the Rue St. Jacques, could not exhibit so new and elegant an exterior as the handsomely arranged front of the young tradesman. They were not the only persons at their door ;

throughout the whole extent of the long street, as far as the eye could reach, might be seen eager watchers, anxiously expecting the coming of the procession led by the Cardinal de Bourbon, abbé of St. Germain des Prés, which was expected to be more splendid than anything of the kind ever seen. Very little business had been going on for some weeks, every inhabitant of Paris being engaged in sight-seeing; a few of the more sober began to wish that the rejoicings were over, as they had too long put a stop to all useful and rational employment. Such was not, however, the opinion of Jean Montault, the host of the Bel Image tavern, whose trade flourished during the festivities, and who could scarcely find hands sufficient to attend to his numerous guests. Cornalet, the grocer, next door, was seen reclining behind his jars, leaning on his elbows, and talking to petit Jacques the cobbler, who had suspended his work and had thrust his head and body out of the dark cell in which his avocations were carried on; while Pierre Blampignon the torch-maker, bustled about from one neighbour to the other, recounting a thousand adventures which had lately happened to him, in all of which he appeared to have acted the part of a hero. The general theme of

discourse was the late marriage of the Princess Marguerite, and the fêtes which succeeded it. All the speakers proclaimed their share in the events, and it seemed, to hear their relations, that but for their assistance nothing would have gone on well, and every particular individual appeared to be convinced that he had received some especial mark of grace or recognition from the high personages whose notice they had attracted. There was some little discrepancy in their descriptions: one mistaking the Queen-mother for the bride, and another singling out various ladies of the train to represent the two brides; but universal satisfaction was at all events diffused, and everyone was perfectly contented to suppose that his friend had made a mistake and not himself. "I was as close," said Pierre Blampignon, "to the lady Marguerite as I am to you; and, St. Marie! what a presence she has! her hair is exactly the colour of Maître Lus-saut's chains, and shines as brightly."

"What mean you?" exclaimed Petit Jacques; "her hair is as black as my shoe."

"And curls all down her back, like a row of corkscrews," added Montault the host.

"I was as close," pursued Blampignon, "to the Bearnais"—

"As wax," interrupted Petit Jacques. "But that his nose is somewhat shorter, I should say he is the moral of neighbour Mamert, the schoolmaster, and nearly as fat."

"Why where did you put your eyes?" cried several voices; "his nose is as long as Le Grand Francois' himself."

"He is much more like Maître Colin, the embroiderer; but anyhow he looked well in his yellow satin, and so did the young Condé; but the King," said the host of the Bel Image, who was listened to in his quarter as an oracle, "is but poor looking, after all. I like a man portly and commanding, it looks so much better in a procession."

This he said with a complaisant glance towards his own figure, which, adorned as it was with a long and ample apron covering his full-plaited under garments and just reaching to his expansive calf, answered well to his own ideas of majesty.

"I was as close," recommenced Pierre, "to the scaffolding as the guards themselves, and should have had a full view of the Cardinal only that his back was to me; and, just as he was turning round, a great giant of a halberdier gave me such a thrust, that I was sent head over heels amongst the crowd."



Much laughter followed this account of himself, which disconcerted the little torch-maker, who went on to say, that, immediately recovering himself, he rose from the ground, and throwing his cap in the air, cried at the top of his voice, "*Vive le Béarnais!*" Upon which, he assured his hearers that the Prince, with a gracious smile, nodded his head to him, and appeared much gratified. As much of this climax, added by their boasting friend, as pleased them, was received by the gay audience, who were ready to be amused at anything.

"Be careful, Maître Lussaut," said the cobbler "not to carry your wife too near the court in future, for, they say, the young Navarrais is a *Diable à quatre* for a pretty face."

The blushing Clarice withdrew into her doorway on hearing this piece of gallantry, and her gratified husband invited the party to take a cup to the health of the new-married pair, which was cheerfully agreed to by all, and the host of the "Bel Image" supplied the refreshing draught with alacrity.

"And how," asked Lussaut, "go on the students of late—have there been any more disputes about their right to the Abbot's field?"

"No," answered Montault, "they have been quiet so long, that I think something must soon

happen to keep their hands in or they will forget their old trade of worrying the monks. Well, I do confess, good Catholic as I am, that I always rejoice when the students get the better: they are fine spirited fellows, and ready for any game, while the lazy monks do no good for trade whatever."

"No," said Lussaut, "and so profligate a set are they, that no decent man should let his wife go near them. To be sure, there are good of all sorts: I have a brother of St. Francis lodging in my house now, and a better man cannot live."

"He will do well to keep out of the way of my friends of the University," replied the host, "who respect the Cordeliers so little that they care not for what the cowl covers. I hear there is to be a grand meeting soon of the scholars to fish in the Petit Seine, which, you know, is the great lake in the Pré. If there is not a scuffle with the monks to prevent them, I am mistaken, for they swear no one shall fish there but themselves."

"Well," joined in Pierre Blampignon, "I never could see much difference between the Huguenots and ourselves, except that one eats fish and the other flesh, — but I don't pretend to know much about it."

"Why," returned Montault, "the difference is this: when a man comes to a tavern and asks, 'Well, host, what have you to-day? — any poisons de Bondy, or hareng salé?' I know at once he is a Catholic,—that is, on some days of the week; but if he comes in on a Friday, and calls out, 'Bring me a smoking mess of bouillie, or a pâté de Mayence, and a good bottle of white hypocras,' I see through him at once. But it matters little to me provided he pays; and I cannot think why the King and the Cardinal should make so much fuss about such a trifle. Perhaps, if I were to pronounce, I should say the Catholic is in general the best drinker, and the Huguenot the best eater."

"Well," said petit Jacques, the cobbler, "I hope, without sin, I may say I prefer the heretic; for as he never goes barefoot on a pilgrimage, he must always want shoes."

At this moment a party was seen coming down the street, which Montault recognised as some of his friends the students, and he began to bustle and make preparations for their welcome with great zeal.

"Happy to see you, young masters," he exclaimed, "your visits are rare nowadays. What shall I get for your honours?"

"All you have," exclaimed several of the

party; "we are resolved to have a day of it, as this is to be the last; so spare nothing. Belcastel treats."

As this was said the young student in question threw a well-filled purse to the landlord, calling out in a ringing musical voice, "Here, old Montault, *touche là*, take this, — for a few hours hence we may not recollect quite clearly what is owing. Quick! bring us plenty of wine, for we want to be in spirits to greet our old friends the Cordeliers, who will, no doubt, appear in the full force of hypocrisy in a few minutes with all the pious of Paris at their heels."

In effect, as Belcastel spoke, the sound of musical instruments was heard announcing the approach of the solemn procession, expected with the same anxiety as any other of the numerous pageants which inundated the city of Paris at that moment of rejoicing. Religious feeling was, for the time, quite forgotten in the delight of witnessing the singular and magnificent spectacle which vied with the profane shows got up for the entertainment of the people. First came a band of musicians dressed in flowing robes, richly embroidered, and performing airs of so lively a description, that they might well have suited a less solemn occasion.

Their nature, however, occasionally changed to slow and serious as they passed any of the numerous monastic or ecclesiastical buildings on their route, and as the train was joined by different members of other fraternities. All the children that could be collected in the Faubourg St. Germain walked barefooted, dressed in white, with garlands of flowers on their heads, each child bearing a lighted torch of wax. This part of the ceremony was extremely beautiful, and a murmur of applause from all greeted the innocent and graceful bands of little penitents, whose rosy faces and smiling lips seemed to contradict the remorse which was supposed to inspire them for sins already or about to be committed. A countless concourse of monks, of the orders of Capucins, Augustins, Penitens Blanc, Jacobins, and others, was followed by the priests of St. Sulpice and the monks of St. Germain. All these were allowed by the students to pass quietly; but when a long line of Cordeliers of St. Francis drew near, it was with the utmost difficulty that the prudent host could restrain the impertinent sallies of the students. A spectacle, however, now appeared, which at once put his authority to flight, and indeed created great scandal amongst all the lookers-on, for it was a custom fallen somewhat

into disuse, and now revived in order to attract more attention to those religious observances which the stricter order of Catholics feared were being neglected. The seven shrines of St. Germain, containing relics of the most sacred nature, were borne along by a great number of monks, almost naked, having, in fact, nothing on but a shirt,—their arms, legs, and feet exposed: in this guise they walked slowly along, chanting hymns, and appearing in a state of ecstatic devotion. At this sight a volley of abuse burst from the lips of the young students; and so far did their insolence carry them, that a quantity of dried peas and beans, with which they were provided, were used to pelt these extraordinary penitents, accompanied by shouts of derision. However, they were at length prevailed on to be reasonable; and, after some contention with the soldiers who attended on this part of the procession, to which some opposition had evidently been anticipated, the holy band of brothers passed on. The Cardinals of Bourbon and Vendôme, followed by a train of meaner dignitaries, closed the scene, and a mixed multitude of idlers, thieves, rioters, and inquisitive gazers, rushed tumultuously through the streets, much to the annoyance and disturbance of the neighbourhood.

As the students were seated at the open window of the tavern, they were able to observe all the passers-by, and after having indulged in much vituperation of the scene they had just witnessed, began to amuse themselves with jokes upon the passengers. Belcastel, who seemed their leader, was a young man of handsome figure and fresh complexion, and with a lively, careless, and independent expression of countenance, frank and prepossessing; his spirits were of the lightest kind, and he looked ready for any frolic that might be proposed. Nothing, however, very tempting appeared, and he suggested that, after finishing their bottle, they should adjourn to the *Porte de Bussi*, to see the feats of the Italian juggler, with whose performances of throwing the assa-guay all Paris had been lately amused. They accordingly sallied out into the street, and had not proceeded far when they observed a *Corde-lier* advancing on the opposite side.

"Hallo! friend," cried one of them, "what do you here? Go back, the penitents are gone the other way. Do you think you have no sins to answer for, that you turn your back upon the holy train?"

The monk continued his way without noticing them, when Belcastel said to his companions,—

"Comrades, this fellow seems insolent; one of you go and invite him to our grand fishing in the Pré, and see what answer he will make."

A shout of laughter followed, and several of the students, arm in arm, crossed over to the monk, and barred his passage, addressing him in no very reverend manner.

"Young men," he answered, "let me pass: I do not interrupt you, and cannot be detained."

"Indeed!" said they, "we will see that. You shall turn back when you are told, and learn to obey the monarchs of the Bazoche, though you think to lord it with your cord and cowl over all the other crowns of the earth."

So saying, they attempted to seize the Cordelier, who, stopping suddenly short, with one blow of his hand swept two of the foremost from his path. "Go, fools!" he exclaimed. "Is this the way you waste the spirit which should lead you to defend your country and your liberties? By such follies as this is France subdued and sunk!"

"What meddling priest dares to say aught against France or Frenchmen?" cried Belcastel, advancing, — while the rest surrounded the monk, and with threats and exclamations tried to force him to turn back with them, vowing



that they would carry him to his superior and see discipline inflicted on him for his sins.

"Idiots!" exclaimed the Cordelier, "you know not what you do, nor the mischief to a good cause by detaining me. If there are any Protestants amongst you, as I judge," he continued, "know that you are insulting a friend, and you may soon stand in need of more than you imagine."

"Stand back, gentlemen," said a voice from the crowd which was by this time assembled and enjoying the fray,—and a young man pushing through them, advanced to the students. "This is not fair play," said he, "the Cordelier is one to twenty, and so I take his side were he ten times a monk."

"Ha! Claude, is it you," cried Belcastel, "as usual, always with the weakest; but this is our business, not yours; besides you are no longer one of us, and we are resolved to have our way."

"Not if I can prevent it," said Claude, "you are wrong; this monk offered you no interruption and he shall pass free."

"Well said, young champion," exclaimed the monk, "but give yourself no trouble, I am in no danger from these gentlemen, who already draw back, and are ready to hear reason."

"Down with him!" cried a fierce voice, "down with the thief who calls himself a friend to the Huguenots! we will have no more heretics to give us laws while there are good Catholics amongst us."

"Who speaks against the Huguenots?" cried a dozen of the excited students, who, ready for any fray, cared little what was its object.

"'Tis Crucé, the butcher," answered one near; "he is drunk as usual, heed him not." But the conflict had already begun.

Crucé, a gigantic fellow, with his sleeves tucked up to the elbow, displaying his muscular arms, advanced to the Cordelier, whom he seized, with the intent of throwing him down; but to the surprise of all, his grasp was arrested by that of the monk, who, throwing his gown over his arm, sprang upon him, and in a moment felled him to the earth.

"Well done, Cordelier!" cried the crowd, with whom Crucé was in no particular veneration, being known as a brawler and ruffian.

"Give way," cried the monk, "and disperse to your homes; there will be more serious work for you all soon; hold yourselves prepared,—and you, young men of the Religion, be upon your guard, and know your friends from your enemies."

So saying, and with a look of approbation towards Claude, he disappeared amongst the crowd; but not before the revengeful eye of Crucé had tracked him till he entered the shop of Mathurin Lussaut.

Belcastel and some of his friends, with looks somewhat ashamed and disconcerted, now greeted Claude as an old acquaintance, for all the young men of the different colleges professed, to a certain degree, the defence of a common cause against the monks of St. Germain des Prés. And though Claude and Belcastel had not studied together, they had been long known to each other, before either of them came to Paris: the former, however, being by far the more studious, seldom joined in any of the noisy sallies of the companions of Belcastel, and they had not met for some time. Resisting their importunities to join a revel which they had resolved to indulge in, Claude, after a brief conversation, left them, and they separated different ways.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE ASSASSIN.

Where is the villain? — let me see his eyes,  
That when I note another such a man  
I may avoid him.

SHAKSPEARE.

CLAUDE was returning near the gates of the Louvre, when he remarked a cavalcade of gentlemen issuing from the palace, and observed that the Admiral de Coligny was at their head. He followed the way they took, gratified to see how cheerful and contented the whole party appeared, which circumstance, after the sinister reports which had of late prevailed, was peculiarly cheering, as he doubted not that they had just parted from the King, and had reason to be satisfied with their interview. The Admiral's expressive countenance was highly animated, and he seemed to be repeating some anecdote which excited great merriment amongst his companions. The train proceeded along the Rue des Fossés St. Germain, and as they

rode quickly, they had considerably preceded Claude, who stood up as they passed him, when on a sudden the report of a pistol struck his ear, and loud exclamations followed. Instant confusion prevailed amongst the crowd of horsemen, and as Claude hurried to the spot he perceived with horror that the Admiral had fallen to the ground, covered with blood, and was supported by several of his friends. At the same instant shouts of "Coligni is murdered !" echoed from mouth to mouth.

It was soon discovered that his left arm was frightfully shattered, and one finger of his right hand shot away. Without, however, showing the least emotion of pain, he pointed in the direction of the house from which the fatal aim appeared to have been taken, and a rush was immediately made towards it: a crowd soon assembled, some of the enraged bystanders, uttering loud cries, thundered for admittance at the doors; others endeavoured to scale the walls, and enter by the windows. The suspected house was one belonging to the Canon de Villemur, formerly preceptor of the Duke de Guise. Cries of "Down with Guise!—down with the assassins!" echoed on all sides, as, with a loud crash, the door of entrance was forced in, and the mob gained possession.

While some rushed up the stairs and into the front rooms, Claude by chance, who, excited by grief and rage, had been one of the first to gain admission, penetrated to the back part of the house, where, finding the doors fastened outside, he leaped from a window which he succeeded with difficulty in opening, and springing with the rapidity and agility of a mountaineer over the wall, which separated him from a small court, caught a glimpse of a man hastily mounting a horse, which was held by another, who seemed urging him to use diligence, and the words, "Well aimed, Maurevel!" struck his ear. The next instant he darted forward, but the horseman was already out of sight, and the person who had assisted him was flying with the utmost precipitation. The voice which had uttered those few words was familiar to Claude's ear; the figure of the fugitive was not less so. With a swiftness which seemed like that of lightning, he pursued him along the cloisters of the building, and with a sudden spring seized him in a powerful grasp, from which he endeavoured to free himself in vain, while Claude recognized, with a shudder of horror and an exclamation of indignation, the features of René Bianco.

"Villain! — traitor!" cried Claude, "you

are my prisoner. You have named your accomplice, and there remains but to confess who is your employer."

"Claude," exclaimed René, struggling violently, "what means this treatment? — do you know me?"

"I know you," cried Claude, "for an assassin and a coward, and will deliver you to the justice which awaits you."

He then called loudly, and endeavoured to drag the Italian towards the house.

"Unhand me!" fiercely shrieked René; "unhand me, or my dagger shall teach you wisdom."

"I fear you not," retorted Claude, "though it were as deadly as all the poisons of your accursed land can make it. Murderer, you shall be known!"

"Beware!" said René in a low voice, as he clenched his teeth, and his countenance became livid with malignity, "beware how you make me your enemy. The Admiral is not the only victim: there are yet many in store, and you shall not be forgotten. Once more, loose your hold! — But it matters not — If they take me, what have I to fear?"

The loud exclamations of Claude had by this time brought to the spot a numerous party.

Bianco was instantly secured, and it was with some difficulty that the mob was prevented from doing summary justice upon him when Claude related the circumstances of his capture, and the assistance he had afforded to the probable assassin. After having given the required promise to appear in evidence against him when called upon, he quitted the scene, and hurried home, agitated with thoughts of the most alarming nature, and fears for the future which seemed but too likely to be realized.

The attempted assassination was soon the universal theme throughout Paris, and great consternation and grief ensued: the wounds of the Admiral, though severe, were not mortal, but the fact of the crime having been perpetrated struck terror into the minds of all. The Duke de Guise was openly accused, as it was well known that he had never abandoned the belief that the Admiral was guilty of the death of his father, through the means of Poltrot, however clearly the contrary had been proved. When the news was brought to King Charles, his fury knew no bounds: he hesitated not to name his mother, his brother, and all their partisans, as the authors of the deed; and it was only when Catherine, after allowing the first burst of feeling to subside, sought his presence,



and, joining with him in indignant exclamations of sorrow and regret, proposed that they should go together to visit the sick-bed of the victim of De Guise, that he was pacified. Accordingly, with every demonstration of grief and affection, the royal party repaired to the Admiral's lodgings, and there by his bed side poured out their expressions of attachment and lamentation; and before they quitted him, the King insisted upon supplying him with a party of his own guards to protect him against the future designs of his enemy. Accordingly a strong force arrived, and was posted at the Admiral's gates; and the Protestant party, grateful for so much consideration, filled the air with acclamations, as the King, his face covered with tears and trembling with emotion, returned in his carriage with the Queen Mother to the palace. Scarcely, however, had they arrived there, when the mask was thrown off: subdued and terrified, Charles listened to the artful details given him by his mother of discovered plots, traitorous designs, and wicked devices of the Admiral and his party.

"These pestilent Huguenots," said Catherine, "enemies to God and man, have been plotting our destruction ever since we admitted them to our friendship. Instead of being sensible of

the indulgence we have extended towards them, their sole aim is to wrest the power from our hands. They have powerful leaders, and are not wanting in either spirit or cunning: not only have they sworn to exterminate our religion, but a solemn compact has been entered into, to destroy and utterly root out the race of Valois. You, my beloved son, are to be the first victim. I know, from certain information, that your life is not safe one hour, and the whole of their designs are of so monstrous a kind that human nature shudders to reflect on them."

"But," said the unfortunate King, "what are their resources? are they not all here as our guests, as our friends? are we not stronger than they? and could we not at once put them down with a firm hand, rather than take them off man by man."

"Charles," answered Catherine, "you are deceived. The Admiral has already sent despatches to Germany and Switzerland, where twenty thousand men are at his disposal. If these troops join the malcontents we are fostering in our bosom, destitute as your Grace is at this moment of men and money to meet so sudden and powerful an outbreak, what is to become of France and the kingdom?"

"But why not hear the Admiral,—why not side with the Protestants and do them justice?" urged Charles. "I have given my word to assist them—to treat them as my subjects, and to see that all parties are satisfied."

A sneer passed over Catherine's features. "I thought so," she continued, "they are too artful for your inexperience; trust in me; and know, my dear Charles, that we have many Catholic subjects equally ready to take advantage of popular commotion; at this moment they are only waiting for a demonstration of friendship from you towards the Huguenot party, and they are ready to elect a captain-general, and to make a league, offensive and defensive, against their enemies. Where then is your power? where is your authority in the kingdom? Appease this fury, show your people that you can indeed govern; let not childish compassion veil your eyes; look upon your own peril, and join with me to avert it! Charles," she added, solemnly, observing the impression she had made, "hear all from me. It was not the Duke de Guise alone, armed with vengeance for his father's murder, it was my hand that directed this blow, and would, that all your enemies were collected in one head, that I might crush them as Coligni must be crushed."

Charles heard the last fearful words with a start of mingled horror and astonishment, and as she ended buried his face in his hands, and a shiver passed through his frame; in a few moments he looked up, and his mother, in her turn, was surprised at the livid look and appalling expression of his face. He started from his seat, and with a loud laugh tossed his arms above his head, exclaiming in a furious voice,—

“Is it so? is it so? I am then cajoled and deceived, and played upon by all; but they shall see it is not with impunity. By the death of that God who knows friends from foes — by the hopes of my distracted soul, — and by my fear of eternal torture, I dedicate them to destruction — all — all! — If it was right to kill the Admiral, why should any escape — why should one accursed Huguenot exist in France? Let them all perish from the face of the earth; — leave not one alive to reproach me — let me never behold an accusing eye; but exterminate the rebels and traitors like a swarm of locusts. Give orders — no delay — no pause; be prompt and firm — give my orders for immediate execution — allow me no time to relapse into apathy — obey me at once. To you, my mother, I delegate my authority; — whatever your superior and all-comprehensive judg-

ment suggests, follow. I am unfit to advise, — I am unfit to reflect — let me hear that the enemies of my throne and my religion have no longer a name in France !”

Exhausted with his exertion, and the frantic thoughts which had excited it, Charles, as he finished uttering this fearful mandate, fell senseless on the floor, at the feet of his exulting mother, who, as she ordered him to be carefully conveyed to his chamber and every assistance rendered him, exclaimed to her friends,

“ We have conquered ! — the work has now only to go on.”

Half an hour after that interview, the Catholic inhabitants of the streets in the neighbourhood of the Admiral's dwelling, were ordered to give up their houses and accommodations to his Protestant adherents. A muster-roll was made in every part of Paris, and the deceived members of *the Religion* were exhorted to seek safety against the barbarous plans of the party of Guise, in the protection of their friend the King. The King of Navarre was requested to send all the soldiers of his party, and all the people he could spare to the Louvre, as the Court entreated his assistance against the suspected Guises. All these precautions succeeded to admiration ; the enthusiasm of the Protestants was at its

height, at the generous conduct of King Charles, and their loyalty excited to defend him from the menacing danger.

One circumstance alone caused general surprise and dissatisfaction. Many attempted to explain it by affirming that the whole affair had originated in mistake; yet it was not without comment that René Bianco was seen to take his station about the person of the Queen-mother, as usual, after having been detained only a few hours in custody.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## LES CARRIERES DE ST. JACQUES.

Of horrid shapes and sights and *deeds* unholy.

MILTON.

THE city of Paris stands upon an exhausted quarry, which extends for leagues beneath the surface, its hollow caverns and vaulted chambers spreading far and wide. Formerly the sight of the catacombs gave an idea of their vastness; but as that avenue is closed, their mysterious wonders are now left to the imagination, which can scarcely exaggerate their fearful depth and appalling length. The variety of forms assumed by the huge blocks of stone left rugged from excavation, might suggest images of unknown hideousness, but within the centre of the rocks have for ages been discovered the fossil remains of antediluvian monsters far more extraordinary and frightful than fancy alone could frame. These, when found in early times, when learning was confined to a

few, naturally gave rise to fables, which soon obtained belief amongst the vulgar, ever ready to credit marvellous reports, and, by degrees, it became an article of faith that the *carrières* were haunted to their utmost extent by demons, who kept up a continual sabbath with witches, conjurers, and other weird beings.

The monks, in the monasteries situated without the town, such as those of St. Germain des Prés, Nôtre Dame des Champs, and others, did not discourage these superstitious notions, as the exercise of their powers in driving away the fiends gave them opportunities which they were not slow to embrace. For centuries, the existence of these caverns had been turned to account by the priests who officiated in the temples which formerly rose where numerous monasteries now appeared; and it is even possible that the Druids made use of them in carrying on their holy cheats.

Amongst other mysterious beings supposed to inhabit and frequent the *carrières*, it was currently believed that the celebrated *Idole St. Germain*, which had disappeared from the altar in the church of St. Germain des Prés in the year 1514, had been borne away by the demons who were its servants, and was now enshrined beneath the monastery in one of the loftiest



and most remote of the halls of hewn stone which that labyrinthine region presented.

This figure had been known to keep its station in the church of St. Germain for years uncounted, and was held in great awe by all who entered the sacred precincts. Placed with its back against the southern wall, of which it appeared to form a part, this gigantic shape, rearing its huge dimensions almost to the roof, seemed to be kept immovable by the sight of the large crucifix of the altar. It presented the semblance of a female, gaunt, thin, and haggard, with dishevelled hair, and with a severe countenance. Its enormous limbs were bound rather than concealed by a thin veil clinging close to the shape, and at its base was an inscription which had been explained to mean, — "I am all that has been and that is: no mortal has ever drawn aside my veil!"

Long had the frowning idol been retained within the church, apparently with a view to warn the true believer against the dangers of paganism, and it was looked upon as the impersonation of evil, and passed with fear and trembling: few dared to raise their eyes to its sinister stony countenance, but hurried on to cast themselves at the foot of the cross, where St. Germain himself stood in his niche, pointing

sternly towards the heathen statue whom the potency of religious belief had subdued.

There was in the convent a learned monk who was its sacristan, called John the Wise,—for few secrets in nature or art were hidden from him, and he one day waited on the Abbot to reveal to him what his great knowledge had discovered. He related that of late as he was accustomed to enter the church in the dead of night to pray, he had several times been startled by extraordinary sounds, and words uttered in a language which he had never familiarly heard before, but which his learning told him was that of the ancient Egyptians. He had carefully concealed himself behind the carved pillars which circled the great idol, whose grotesque mouldings seemed to have some connexion with her awful form, and there he had at length been witness to a scene which filled him with amazement.

A part of the most antique portion of the sacred edifice had appeared to shake with sudden throes; the heavy pavement sank by degrees, and disclosed a yawning chasm beneath, from whence issued a train of persons, whose appearance was so remarkable that at first he could hardly credit the evidence of his senses. They walked one by one, and were clothed in

drapery very similar to that worn by the idol; some of them had heads of birds, others those of dogs, but their bodies were human; they marched slowly to the muffled sound of instruments such as he had never heard played before, and whose shapes were only known to him in the rolls of papyrus over which he was in the habit of poring. When the procession had reached the foot of the idol, all bowed down before it, and uttered words which he only imperfectly understood; but they seemed to imply that the period of her release was at hand, and that the reign of Isis would once more return. They conjured her to follow them, and informed her that a temple was prepared in the region from whence they had arrived, where she would be honoured by fitting votaries who were impatient for her presence. The great idol was for a long time unmoved, but on a sudden her stony eyes rolled in their sockets, her lips began to move, and she bowed her head in token of assent.

"My Lord Abbot," said friar John the Wise, "the Pagan image has not lifted its head from the position in which that action left it, and you may now behold it as I have described."

The Abbot, greatly astounded, summoned every member of the community, and in a

body they hastened to the church, where they saw, with extreme terror, that the chin of the gigantic image rested on its breast, and its stony eyes appeared detached from their sockets.

The Abbot lost no time in calling to his aid all the powers of the church: the image was exorcised, and masses and prayers innumerable were said to avert the evil threatened in the vision. Still there stood the *grande Idole*, with its head bent; and for three nights longer nothing occurred to indicate evil.

On the fourth day a grand procession was to take place, and after having made the round of the city, was to return to the high altar of St. Germain, where a solemn mass was to be celebrated. Just as the Abbot at the head of his train was entering the aisle, a tremendous sound was heard, as if a huge mass of stone was thrown upon the pavement, and amidst the flicker of the tapers and the flare of the torches, an indistinct form appeared moving near the circle of pillars where the Grande Idole rested against the wall: three times the thundering noise was repeated, as though of the steps of some huge animal, and a peal as of thunder shook the building. The priests and monks in terrified confusion rushed to various places of shel-

ter; but the Abbot and Jean le Sage, the Sacristan, regardless of danger, went on.

On approaching the upper end of the aisle, what was their amazement to discover the place of the *Grande Idole* vacant, and no trace of her left in the church where she had for so many centuries resided.

From that period she was never heard of, and it became a crime to make mention of her: by degrees therefore her memory sank into oblivion, and the circumstances of her disappearance were retained only by a few.

As these *facts* faded in men's minds, a simpler account was generally given, which satisfied the generality of people.

This was merely that the Sacristan, having reported to the Abbot that he had seen a woman on her knees before the idol, holding a branch of lighted candles, he interrogated her, and found that she had met with some trifling loss, which the mischievous students of St. Germain des Prés had persuaded her to inform the idol of, who would indicate to her where it was to be found. This statement induced the Abbot to command the demolition of the antique statue; and it was accordingly removed from its place in the church, and, some accounts agreed, was broken to pieces.

There were, however, as has been said, inhabitants of the carrières at a later period who knew the fate of the great idol, and knew also that the prediction of those strange Egyptians was come to pass; for she was worshipped in a subterranean temple as the *Mère de Mal*, and her votaries were many and powerful, for they were no other than the fraternity which went by the name of "Les Mauvais Garçons," being simply all the robbers, pickpockets, coiners, murderers, and other malefactors of Paris, who found safety from pursuit in the murky retreats of those dreary abodes,—as to follow them into their dens was a service of danger not to be attempted by the uninitiated.

The caverns of the Chemin d'Issy and d'Enfer had long possessed the reputation of being peopled by myriads of infernal spirits, as the noises they made sufficiently testified, and the Diable de Vauvert was an accredited imp in whom it were treason to disbelieve. There were communications between almost all these widely separated excavations, known only to the gloomy habitants of the place, and never revealed to the dwellers on upper earth. Those of the Carrières St. Jacques were amongst the most considerable, and it was to one of the most frequented parts of that region that the Florentine,

René Bianco's course was bound on the evening of the day on which the attempt had been made on the Admiral's life.

For this purpose, no sooner was he freed from durance, than he repaired to the Rue St. Jacques, and entered the shop of Crucé, the butcher, situated nearly at the extremity of the street leading to the route d'Orleans.

"Oh! you are come at last," said Crucé, in a gruff voice, as he entered; "our comrades have been waiting for you, and begin to be impatient; so little work has been done of late that the trade does not thrive, and some begin to murmur. It's hard a man can't live by his calling: what's the use of Court friends if we're to be poorer than ever."

"As usual, grumbling ever!" said René in a gay tone; "but I have news which will brighten up all your hearts,—ay, and we must lose no time either. Let us instantly to the quarries, where I suppose Captain Florio is already arrived!"

"Ancelin, the dwarf, was here but now," answered Crucé, "and tells me he is just arrived with a band of thirty. If you have no work for us it is only bringing so much more trouble; we have had promises and fine words enough of late."

Growling and surly, the gigantic ruffian took a small lamp from a hook in his shop, which he gave to René, and provided himself with another, and after fastening his door and window proceeded with the Italian to the back court of his house, where, at the foot of a small round tower built into the newer walls which surrounded it, he entered a cellar with his companion, and by the help of his lamp discovered a flat stone, which he raised by pressing his foot upon one corner, and a dark flight of steps was evident beneath it. These they descended together, and groped along a dark passage for nearly a quarter of a mile, occasionally coming to openings, wide and rugged, which their lamps served to show in all their gloom. Sometimes they had to climb over huge blocks of slippery sandstone; on which the continual dropping from the roof fell in streams: here and there yawning chasms appeared beneath their feet, whose depth it was fearful to imagine, and high arches and vaults seemed to conduct to different chambers, where nothing but blackness was perceptible, and where numerous bats, scared by the lights they carried, flitted along with short, shrill cries.

“Mort Dieu!” said René, “these quarries are most convenient places,—what would the



fraternity do without them?—but I must confess it is not quite so pleasant or so easy to walk amongst them, as upon the marble floor of the Louvre.”

“I dare say not,” said Crucé, with a sneer; “but if you were flying for your life, and I after you, with my good axe in hand, as many a one has done before now—I fancy you ’d get on a little faster than you do. However, we are nearly arrived at the Trou de malaise, where the band are waiting for us. Hilloa! ho! ho!” and as he spoke, he exalted his voice, and the echoes round took up the sound which soon reached the ears to which it was intended to convey a note of greeting.

A responding shout was returned, and, after a little more climbing and slipping, the pair were in the presence of their comrades.

The chamber or hall in which the confraternity were all assembled, presented features of great peculiarity. It was one of the largest and highest of the many around, and formed, as it were, the centre of a star, from which numerous rays diverged, for in every direction spread out, in long lines of darkness, mysterious paths, conducting to other caves at different distances. The fire which burnt in the middle of this cave, threw upon the surrounding walls

a glare of fitful light, which exhibited its decorations in startling clearness.

Opposite the entrance, towering to the roof, stood the *Mère de Mal* herself, as hideous and fearful as when she scared the faithful in the Church of St. Germain des Prés: hung round at various heights were exhibited monstrous skeleton forms, dug at different times out of the quarries, some appearing of the shape and size of crocodiles, but having attached to their scaly backs enormous fan-formed wings, others like hogs, but of gigantic proportions, and with horns and tusks of wondrous strength; a few bore the semblance of toads, but larger than the largest tortoise, with grinning mouths and long sharp claws. Some were like birds, with necks elongated in an incredible manner, and with heads almost human in their hideousness. Instruments of various kinds were piled on the floor, and weapons in heaps were to be seen scattered about.

At the vaulted entrance of this cavern stood a man of middle age, dressed in the ordinary garb of a mechanic, but who, from the command he appeared to take over the rest, seemed to be the chief person there. He was greeted by Bianco as *Maistre Larondelle*, and a somewhat surly recognition took place between the but-

cher, Crucé and this worthy, intended, however, to convey expressions of good fellowship.

He marshalled his guests into the interior, where, in groups, some seated round the fire, some standing or reclining near their grim-looking household gods, a party of not less than fifty men were discovered.

A murmur of satisfaction ran through their ranks, as Larondelle named Bianco, and a tall man, wrapped in a large dark mantle, starting forward, embraced him, uttering words in Italian expressive of his pleasure in meeting an old friend. The dress of this man was peculiar; as his cloak was thrown aside it revealed a highly ornamented garb, where gold embroidery and rich colours were conspicuous. In his party-coloured sash he wore pistols and two daggers; his high-crowned hat was much pulled over his eyes, across its crown was a bunch of hawk's-feathers placed in front, and ribbons of various hues adorned it to the top of the cone. Some of the many he introduced to René as his followers, and described them as gentlemen of fortune, escaped, like himself, from the galleys not long since, and now fully prepared to execute any scheme which might be proposed for their profit and the good of the community. René addressed him as Captain Florio; congratulated him on

his fortunate escape from his enemies, and took upon himself to make him better known to the assembled party, with whom, he would probably in future, have much in common.

"This," said René, presenting to him the short, thick-set, low-browed man of scowling aspect who presided, "this, you must know, is my good friend Larondelle the coiner, director of our band, and chief adviser, who has done much service to the company, and whose ingenuity is equal to his courage."

This was received with a suppressed laugh by some present, to whom the latter quality attributed to this distinguished individual was not so well known as the former. Larondelle slunk back with a dissatisfied glance, while René continued :

"This is Aignan Thué the mercer, who has a good shop of his own in the Rue des Carmes, not far from the dwelling of the good Fathers, whose example has greatly benefited his morals. And here I am proud to see my excellent comrade Ancelin, who resides in any part of Paris where he conceives he may be most useful to his neighbours, and whose general knowledge of the locality those of your troop who may not be well acquainted with Paris will find most valuable."

The figure who was the object of René's present discourse was a diminutive man with a large head, long arms, and body squeezed into a small round shape like that of a spider. He had squinting eyes, and very projecting teeth, of which he appeared proud, for he was in the habit of constantly exhibiting them, having apparently so lively a disposition that the slightest circumstance excited his risibility. He was an especial favourite with his friends, being prone to entertain them with the most amusing details of various feats of mischief he was in the daily habit of performing, and being unwearied in the pursuit of any object which was pointed out to him as worthy of employing his talents.

"This respectable tradesman," resumed René, indicating a fierce dogged-looking man in a corner of the cave, on whom the light of the fire shone and gleamed on his rugged features and red hair,—“is Flé, the butcher of the quartier St. Jacques, who is also captain of that district, his good conduct having recommended him to the discriminating magistrates who preserve order amongst our fellow townsmen; and this is the celebrated Captain Roy, truly a *king* of good-fellows, who resides in a remote quarter, but grudges neither time nor distance to serve the cause he has embraced.

The rest of our friends I have no doubt congeniality of feeling will soon make known to you: to enumerate them would take too much time, which is precious with us all. I must immediately proceed to inform you of the object for which we are here assembled, and I am sure it is one in which you will all rejoice."

The banditti crowded round him as he spoke, and eagerly listened to his harangue.

"Many of you no doubt remember the times before the first son of Henry II. reigned, when to meet a Huguenot in the street was to attack him; when to see the door of a Huguenot's house open was to enter and pillage it, and when to inform against a meeting of these heretics was to secure honour and fortune to you, and the stake or the river to them. These happy days have been expiring by degrees; but you will be surprised to know that even at this instant, when the two parties are just united in the strictest bonds of amity, they are to be revived. You look incredulous — but hear me. They are suspected, or said to be suspected, it matters not what the truth may be, of having conspired against the state: their plots are discovered, and instead of the massacre of thousands of good Catholics which they intended to perpetrate, it is resolved that

the same drama shall be acted by the true believers. To be brief, the hour is fixed, and when the clock strikes two on the eve of St. Bartholomew, the work must begin — nor will it end until not a single Huguenot is left in Paris, nay, throughout France, for the word is already given, and in every province the same execution will take place. Be ready, then, my friends, to contribute your share to the general good, and hold yourselves prepared to obey the King's commands, and gain booty and honour."

A loud shout of approbation interrupted his discourse, and cries of "Long live Charles the Ninth!" "Down with the Huguenots!" resounded through the caverns, while some of the new comers, who were Italians, Spaniards, Corsicans, and natives of all nations, devoutly crossed themselves, at which action the free-thinking part of the fraternity, or those who were in the habit of paying their vows to La Mère de Mal, were amused or disgusted as the case might be.

"But what has become of Maurevel?" inquired Thué the mercer: "has he made good his escape?"

"Yes," replied Captain Roy, "the fool has got safely off; but he deserved to be taken for missing so near a shot."

"True," said René; "but he did his best. It was not my fault that you were not employed: the deed would have been done at once, and much trouble spared; but Guise insisted on his man, and we were obliged to agree. However, there will be no failure now, as our plans are excellent."

"How came it that the groom who brought Maurevel his horse was allowed to be taken?" asked Crucé sulkily.

"That," replied Bianco, "is a mere pretence; he will be released immediately: it was only to give a colour to the proceedings, and to humour the King, who could not be gained over at first; but he consents to anything now. You see, my friends," he continued, "we shall have great opportunities; if any little private affair has annoyed us, it can be settled without trouble, for how can it be prevented that some Catholics should fall in the confusion, and who is to inquire how they met their fate?"

"Oh excellent—brave thought!" giggled the dwarf Ancelin; "I have two or three little matters which I shall be glad to set at rest."

"And I," growled Crucé:—"there can be no harm in pulling off the hood of a Cordelier if one can catch him, I suppose?"



"By no means," said René; "every man is at liberty to use his discretion."

"I shall use mine," muttered Flé. "There are more butchers than are necessary in the Rue St. Jacques, and to get rid of a few will make the trade flourish all the better."

"Ha, ha!" screamed Anselm, "what a comical fellow you are; it does me good to hear you. I suppose we need none of us fear to show ourselves in Paris now, as the way is so nicely paved for us?"

"I advise," said René, "that you all keep as close as you conveniently can till midnight on the 24th, when you can come forth, and circumstances can guide your movements. I shall require some of your aid as I propose to be very busy in the *mêlée*, having some interesting business to transact which will require experienced hands."

"Command us!" cried several voices: "we are yours for any service."

It was then agreed between them when and where the chosen friends of René were to meet; and having discussed several other questions, the favourite of Queen Catherine took his leave, returning by another outlet to St. Jacques du Haut Pas, from whence he speedily made his way across the faubourg, and regained the route

which led to the river: as he prudently concluded that it might be as well to avoid being seen by the neighbours of Crucé leaving his domicile at so late an hour as that at which he and his worthy companions separated.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE HOTEL D'HERCULE.

Perplex'd in the extreme.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE these scenes were taking place in the carrières of the city of Paris, the Duke of Guise, to whom the principal arrangement of the whole business had been given by the Queen Mother, and who accepted with avidity the charge which placed his detested foes in his power, was busied in preparing the grand tragedy in which he was to distinguish himself. Great had been the discomfiture of the Prévôts on learning from him the services required of them, which were at first so cautiously communicated, that they were at a loss to understand them. The Duke explained that a plot had been discovered by which the Huguenots proposed to make themselves masters of Paris, and to murder the King and all those who resisted them; it was therefore necessary, he informed

them, that secret and cautious measures should be taken not only to defeat but to punish them ; and as they were known to be very powerful, it would be advisable to observe the utmost care lest they should perceive that their designs were discovered.

“At midnight, therefore,” said the Duke, “on the night of the 24th, assemble all the captains of the different quarters of Paris, and impart to them the news of this diabolical plot ; let them know that we are in danger — that all the princes and nobles of the Catholic faith live as it were in the midst of a mine, which threatens at every instant to blow up and scatter us to the winds. Tell them that we have deliberated and have come to the decision that the only method of delivering ourselves from the persevering treason of these heretics is by one great blow to rid the country of them for ever. Let the signal of slaughter be the tocsin of the city, as with us it shall be the bell of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois : when that strikes two, let every man fall upon his neighbour, and, without distinction of age or station, kill every traitor he meets with. Let the Catholics be distinguished from their foes by a white cross on their hats and a white handkerchief on their left arm ; the sleeve of their right must be tucked

up to the elbow, in order to give them greater facility in the work of just destruction."

With terror and amazement did Charron and Marcel hear these orders, and by every evasion seek to obtain exemption from them, but sternly and angrily De Guise insisted; and delivering to them a written order from the King, their scruples were at length apparently overcome, and they departed to take all the necessary measures for the execution of a deed which the eloquence and art of the enemies of the unfortunate Huguenots had convinced them was necessary for the preservation of France.

Nantouillet, the Prévôt de Paris, was busily occupied in his hotel, on the Quai de la Vallée; he had just taken a survey of all the rooms, and walked with elated mien through the fine painted galleries, where were represented the labours of Hercules, which circumstance had given its name to the house. These paintings were justly celebrated, and indeed it was difficult for art to be carried beyond the architectural ornaments of exquisite grace which the whole mansion displayed, and rare was it to find in Paris a finer collection of the works of the great masters, most of them acquired in the time of Francis I. Nantouillet, who had made a large fortune in trade, had bought the house as it stood, with all

its riches, for an immense sum, paid to the crown; for the Hotel was one of those which had been confiscated, in consequence of the attainder of its original master, the unfortunate Count de Montgomery, for whose marriage it had been furnished in so splendid a manner. A few additions made to it by the rich citizen had added, if not to its classical beauty, at least to its gorgeousness, and just at this period nothing was more talked of than the magnificence of this abode. Nantouillet was always proud of his possessions, but had never been more so than lately, since the King had condescended to promise him a visit.

"I will," said he, mentally, "give those princes such a fête as they have seldom seen before, and exhibit to them such a store of plate as will amaze them, for I flatter myself there are not many Parisians who can afford to entertain them in greater style. Madame Marion," said he, to his housekeeper, "take special care that everything is in the best order, for since his Grace deigns to honour me, I would fain show him something worth the trouble of coming for."

Madame Marion, who was not fond of dictation, answered rather sharply, "Who doubts it? when did I ever neglect anything?—who imagines there is an Hotel in Paris to compare with

this? But why do you invite all these gay gallants of the Court, who sneer and laugh at everything, and do what we will never allow that we of the bourgeoisie can equal them."

"Of the bourgeoisie! why Marion, what do you mean," said Nantouillet, angrily; "havr'n't I money enough to buy them all round? hav'n't they been glad to pawn their estates to me? their jewels and their family plate?—what have they to show that I hav'n't double?"

"Birth,—birth!" said old Marion. "Don't storm and fume—you can't make out a better case to me than the truth:—didn't I live with your father at Orleans when he carried on his business as an apothecary?—and if it hadn't been for my care, would he ever have been such a rich man and left you all this money? But since Madame Marie Touchet, your niece, came to Paris, we hear of nothing but kings and princes,—too much of them, I fancy, for honest citizens: take my word for it, the less you have to do with them the better."

"Hold your peace, Marion!" said Nantouillet, with dignity; "I know my station, do you remember yours. My niece, Marie Touchet, knows a great deal about the court, and is much respected there, and I intend that she shall do the honours of the Hôtel d'Hercule when

the royal party honour me with their visit. It will be a grand affair. I shall invite Marcel and Charron, merely to show them how I can live. I know they will die with spite, but that I do not care for—it will be such a triumph!”

“Here they both come,” said Marion, “and you can give your invitation directly then.”

As she spoke, the two *Prévôts* were announced, and Nantouillet, with much satisfaction, welcomed them, and insisted immediately on taking them into his new gallery, which he assured them was more exquisite than any of the others. “It is,” said he, “entirely built in my own taste. First, I have had the tapestry represent the walls of the Grand Turk’s tent; all round, in the niches, I have placed the marble statues which used to stand in the hall, and some others I have lately bought are, as you perceive, without heads. You will wonder why, but I will tell you—they are antiques, and, I understand, are much more precious when not complete; therefore I have had the heads knocked off in order to produce an uniform effect. I think they never saw this at the Louvre: this is the only room I really like in the whole of this fine house, because I built it myself, and have entirely arranged it according to my fancy.”



The Prévôt de Paris here paused, for he perceived that his two friends were not attending to him, but were conversing with each other. Their countenances were so grave and sad, that the vain dignitary was arrested in his career of taste, and looked at them with anxious curiosity.

"We are not come, Nantouillet," said Charon, "to talk on these matters, but on others much more grave, — I would I could say as agreeable: — but we have a fearful commission delivered to us by the Duke de Guise himself, and we are commanded to impart it to you."

He drew a paper from his pocket, and handed it to Nantouillet, who, casting his eyes over it let it drop from his hands in consternation, while the deep hue of his cheeks changed to ashy paleness.

"St. Marie! — blessed Martyrs! — holy St. Geneviève defend us!" exclaimed he — "murder all the Huguenots in cold blood! Can it be required of us? Is there no way of avoiding it?"

"None," said Marcel, mournfully. "We must use all despatch in assembling the captains, commissaires, quarteniers, and dixeniers of the different quarters of Paris, and direct them to spread the orders to all their inferior

officers and neighbours. Every house harbouring Huguenots must be marked, and measures must be taken to prevent the possibility of their escape."

"But our friends," said Nantouillet: "may we not give information to our friends; may we not warn them of their danger?"

"We must not think of friends or foes," returned Charron; "the orders are peremptory,—our lives will answer for neglecting them. It is a cruel duty, but must be performed. The Huguenots would have done the same by us, but that their plot is discovered."

"The saints be thanked," said Nantouillet, "there are none in my hotel, though I have several excellent friends amongst them who often visit me. Heaven grant they arrive not at this time! What confusion in a house,—a handsome one like this, too!"

"Well," said Charron, "we cannot disobey or delay our order. I must have a thousand men ready this night to act when the signal is given: and having communicated this unpleasant news, I must now leave you, hoping that you will not fail to do all you can in this business — for the best."

The last words were spoken in a significant manner, and appeared to convey a double

meaning to Nantouillet, who wrung his hand without speaking, and the other two Prévôts withdrew.

When left alone, poor Nantouillet was in a great dilemma, and divided between his wish to distinguish himself as a chief magistrate, and his desire to show leniency to the devoted Huguenots, to whom he, in common with the greatest part of the reputable citizens, bore no ill will.

While he was musing in this manner, a door gently opened, and he was aware of the presence of a Cordelier whom he had lately known as a messenger from a friend of his at Lyons, from whom this monk had brought him a message of greeting.

"Enter, good father," said he. "I am glad you are come, for I have a few questions to ask which you can perhaps resolve. Do you think it an act likely to give satisfaction to Heaven, and to draw down a blessing on the actor, to—to put to death a Huguenot?"

The monk started. "My son," said he, "I understand you not: explain. Ours is a religion of peace, and by it murder can never be approved."

"I think as much," replied the perplexed

Prévôt. "Yet a heretic and a traitor, you know, makes it a different thing."

"Are then the Huguenots traitors?" asked the monk. "What are they now accused of?"

"Of a plot, good father," said Nantouillet, "to destroy the King, overturn the state, and massacre all the Catholics in France. Now, you see, this being known, would it not be just and right, and pleasing to Mother Church, that we should punish them for this intent in their own coin?"

"By massacre?" inquired the Cordelier.

Nantouillet nodded assent.

"And is this measure resolved on?" was the inquiry.

"It is, and must be done: this very Sunday night is the time fixed. Not a Huguenot must be left alive in Paris. It is a dreadful business. There may yet be time, good father, if it would not be a sin, to warn a few of one's friends, if you thought absolution could be obtained for—"

"Doubtless, doubtless, my son," said the monk in a hurried tone; "they may by this means be brought to the true faith. It would be a crime to neglect it: it will be a sin to execute such a command. Does the King himself know of this?"

"Oh, ask me nothing," said the Prévôt. "I must say nothing — I am all confusion !"

The Cordelier's emotion was violently excited ; his hands trembled, and his voice was faltering with suppressed feeling, as he uttered, "This is the work of Catherine. I see her hand in it !"

"Good father," said the kind-hearted Prévôt, "you abide in the faubourg St. Germain ; could you not contrive just to — I dare not say the word — I would not, you know, be privy to — the Vidame de Chartres — the Sieur de Caumont — if they knew their danger —"

"They are at the Admiral's at this moment !" exclaimed the Cordelier, "and must be warned."

The Cordelier approached Nantouillet, and took his hand, which he pressed with fervour. "Fear not, excellent man," he whispered ; "there may yet be time. Farewell ! and Heaven prosper you. You will see me no more. I have deceived you for some time past : — this robe which covers me conceals a secret which it is not yet time to reveal. I sought your hotel on a feigned errand. One near and dear to me died in yonder chamber, and at great risk I came here, that I might lay me once more where she lay, and behold the spot where

I parted with her, a corpse, for she was murdered by Queen Catherine !”

“In my house !” interrupted Nantouillet.

“Here,” said the monk. “I can say no more. I thank you for your pity, and may the blessing of Heaven remain with you !”

In another moment the Cordelier was gone, and the Prévôt stood aghast gazing after him.

“He never named the Saints !” exclaimed he. “He is a Huguenot ! A death in my hotel !—how unpleasant. But I will keep it a secret : it would entirely spoil my fête. Alas ! this sad business will greatly interfere with my entertainment. I trust it is a storm which will blow over. I do not see my way in the matter. I must consult — Oh ! would that I had never been Prévôt of Paris,—the object so long of all my desires !”

The discomfited dignitary threw himself upon a seat, and covered his face with his hands, vainly ruminating, and coming at last to no conclusion. He was only roused by the announcement of his supper ; and in the enjoyment of that meal he by degrees lost the intensity of his distress, and began to shape out some plan of conduct which, as a magistrate, it was incumbent on him to pursue.

## CHAPTER XVI.

TWO O'CLOCK.

A wicked day, and not a holy day!

SHAKESPEARE.

CLAUDE, a prey to uneasy thoughts and fearful reflections on the crime of Bianco and the treachery of the court party, was alone in his chamber anxiously expecting tidings of the state of the Admiral, when a knock at his door announced the presence of a young page, whom he recognised as a domestic attendant on dame Mabile. He delivered to him a billet from the nurse, which contained these words: — “Come to me on the instant at the palace; I have an important communication to make, and entreat you not to delay.” He was struck with the hurried style of the note, and was seized with involuntary dread of some impending evil. He lost no time in following the page to the Louvre, and entered the palace by a private door appropriated to the use of the household.

As soon as he reached the apartment of Ma-bille, she hastily welcomed him, and with a look of caution led him into an inner chamber, where, after carefully fastening the door and examining the arras, she seated herself, and desiring Claude to approach thus addressed him :— “ I have just received a warning which has filled me with alarm and uncertainty. This paper was conveyed to me in a sugared sweetmeat, thrown from a gallery of the palace as I passed through one of the halls.” She opened a small slip of paper, and read — “ ‘ You are safe ; but if you have a Huguenot friend, bid him take heed of midnight. Coligni lives, but the next blow will be more sure.’ I am,” said she, “ in great perplexity, not knowing how to act or what to understand : some danger is evidently at hand, but of what nature I am at a loss to conceive. Judge if my fears have justly interpreted. I am about to confide to you a secret which, I know, will be safe in your keeping. Alix, the daughter of the President Bailly, is a Protestant. Her mother secretly nourished the true faith, and on her death-bed confided to me the charge of leading Alix in the right path. Bailly is a rigid papist, and cautiously and silently have I executed the dying commands of her whom I considered as my own off-



spring. Many and severe have been her daughter's trials, but her firm mind has hitherto supported them : terror, however, of her father's anger has made her conceal the truth from him ; of late, indeed, since the apparent reconciliation between the parties, she has comforted herself with the hope of revealing it with less danger of his indignation. Interest is the prime mover of all the actions of Bailly ; and if the Protestants suffer no molestation on account of their religion, but, on the contrary, are supported by the power of the King of Navarre, it will be less difficult to reconcile him to her profession of faith. René Bianco has asked her hand in marriage of her father, and his consent, in spite of the odium which now attaches to him, will not, I fear, be withheld : but Alix has a vow in Heaven against the union, and I know her resolution can never be shaken. What if this warning should point to some danger threatening her ? What if René, aware of her aversion, has discovered her religious opinions, and has some diabolical plan in agitation ? I believe him capable of any crime, — he, — the assassin of the good Coligni, and the murderer of Jeanne of Navarre !”

“ Oh God !” cried Claude, every nerve trembling with emotion, “ what can be done to save

her ! It is but too plain,—he meditates a fearful revenge. Midnight ! — the time is not far distant. Has she no suspicion of her danger ? Have you not—”

“ No,” interrupted Mabile, “ I would not terrify her with what may, after all, be but an idle jest, — for there are many here who love to trifle with the feelings of an aged and favoured person. It is to you alone that I venture to communicate my fears, and would place you on your guard against a possible evil. At the time mentioned see that the house is well secured, — that no precaution of safety is neglected ; and sleep not till the hour of peril be past. Go, then, my dear Claude,—forgive the fears of one who has known so many afflictions that she haply starts at shadows : if we are deceived, the suspicion can perish in oblivion.”

“ I will hasten back without a moment's delay,” cried the impatient Claude. “ Oh ! Mabile, you know not how dear is the charge you have entrusted me with ; my life would be willingly sacrificed to preserve the peace, the happiness of Alix : to protect her is a duty I fly to perform.”

Hastily clasping Mabile's hand, he sprang to the door, but his extreme agitation, as he supposed, prevented his opening it. He press-

ed the spring in vain, it yielded not. Ashamed of his awkwardness, he exerted his strength, — still the door resisted. Mabelle advanced, half-smiling, in spite of her anxiety, at the consequence of his impetuosity, — half-vexed at the delay, but she found her efforts equally unavailing.

“It is strange!” cried both at once, as they united their endeavours, but to no purpose.

“This way!” said Mabelle, turning pale; “you can pass by the other door.” So saying, she led him through a closet to another chamber; but their consternation was great on finding that door also fastened. Mabelle uttered an exclamation of terror. Claude exhausted himself in vain attempts, and paced the room in inexpressible distress.

“What can this mean?” he said — “it cannot be a mere jest; and while I linger, Alix is abandoned. Oh Heavens! is there no means of escaping?—the windows?”

“Alas!” said Mabelle, “we are in the highest part of the palace.” Claude, however, had rushed towards them, and throwing open one observed with dismay its immense height from the ground.

It looked into the outer court of the palace, and he remarked that the space below was

nearly filled with armed men, — while, as he stretched his view beyond, he saw lights moving in all directions, and a confused murmur of voices was borne to him upon the wind, mingled with the clashing of armour and the movement of horses. He now recalled to mind that on his way to the palace his progress had been impeded by the numerous troops of guards whom he had met. He was aware that in consequence of the late horrible attempt on the life of Coligni, double sentries were placed in every direction, and he was not surprised at the stir which he observed everywhere: the enquiries of the page had been answered by the announcement that preparations were making for a nocturnal fête at the Louvre.

Both he and Mabilie gazed hopelessly from their elevated situation, each moment increasing their distress of mind as they vainly speculated on an occurrence of so singular and untoward a nature, if indeed it was not the effect, as they dreaded, of design. They wearied each other in conjecture, and in this manner several hours passed away. As midnight approached, the fears of Claude for Alix rose almost to distraction, and Mabilie wept and prayed alternately in all the agonies of anxiety.

The hour of midnight tolled, and with a

shudder they counted each stroke of the bell. Suddenly they perceived that all the windows in the palace, as far as they could see, were illuminated: the murmur of voices and the clanking of steps became more audible. One o'clock sounded, and the clamour below seemed rather to increase. At length the great bell of the opposite church of St. Germain de l'Auxerois struck two, and its deep, hollow tone, distinctly heard by the prisoners, was intermingled with the loud beating of the palace clock. A few moments elapsed, when the clamour from the court grew louder and louder. Claude bent from the window at which he was stationed: the clear moonlight shone with dazzling brilliancy as if in mockery of the lights which appeared in all directions; but the heavy balconies, and their projecting ornaments, concealed much from his view. Occasionally he caught glimpses of moving figures, some bearing torches, others drawn swords and bayonets. Suddenly a yell, loud, terrible, and continuous, resounded through the air, followed by a tremendous discharge of musketry, amidst the din of which were discernible shouts of exultation, appalling shrieks, agonised cries. Within, without, the tumult raged; the air seemed peopled with yelling demons, and sounds so horrible,

that human nature shuddered to hear them, rang through the brain of Claude and his affrighted companion, as they stood alone, speechless with horror, gazing on each other with starting eyes, doubting whether fear had not deprived them of reason, and that the howling sounds around were not the creation of their disordered imagination.

Louder, more frequent, and more appalling, grew the shouts and cries, mixed with the stunning report of cannon. "The Guises! the Guises!" shrieked Mabile;—"the King! the King! my poor child! they have besieged the palace and will murder him, while I am kept from him by bolts and bars!"

Overcome by the fearful vision her imagination had conjured up, she fell senseless on the floor; while Claude, utterly unable to assist her, stood aghast and immovable with horror. The dreadful truth flashed upon his mind,—a cry reached him, — and the hideous nature of the tumult was revealed;—words of frightful meaning echoed in his hearing, "Kill! kill!—leave none alive!—down with the Huguenots!—strike!—the King commands—strike, in the name of the blessed Virgin, and exterminate the heretics!"

The massacre of St. Bartholomew had begun.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE CONSENT.

I should have thought of heaven and hell conjoined—  
The morning star mix'd with infernal fire—  
Ere I had thought of this.

JOANNA BAILLY.

IN the house of the President Bailly all was tranquillity. Alix, however, had not retired to rest: her mind was occupied with a thousand thoughts which chased each other in quick succession. Now she reflected on the dangers of her position, on the insecurity of all her hopes, on the perils which beset those of her religion: then her imagination brought before her in review the marriage pageant and all its singular accompaniments; and she shuddered as she recollected the looks of the Queen-mother, and the presumptuous bearing of Bianco. She then reverted to his lately-discovered crime, and his extraordinary enlargement, and with grief and fear she remembered that her father

appeared but little to enter into her feelings of indignant horror of his act.

One thought, in spite of all her efforts, she was unable to banish: it returned again and again, and would intrude in spite of her struggles to suppress it—the image of Claude Emars—her deliverer—her friend. His devoted and tender manner,—the pensive and expressive expression of his countenance,—his looks of admiration and of pity which she had observed bent on her face,—all were present to her mental view, and all convinced her, not only that she was dear to him, but that the unfortunate passion which he felt was shared in an equal degree by herself.

The night wore on, and in the silence of her chamber she wept for some time, abandoning herself to melancholy fancies: at length, reproaching herself for thus permitting sorrow to usurp the place of that resignation which the pure faith she had adopted ought to inspire, she knelt and offered to Heaven the homage of an afflicted and innocent heart, and having concluded her prayer, she sang the hymn which follows, to an air composed by the Protestant Goudinel, by whom most of the new translations of the Psalms were set.



Hast thou not promised, Lord, to be  
A refuge to the poor distrest ? —  
Have I not looked from youth to thee  
Since, trembling on my mother's breast,  
I tuned my infant lips to prayer —  
I turned to Heaven, and saw thee there.

For we to many are become  
A by-word and a sound of scorn,  
But still we seek our brighter home,  
And hail the wrongs we long have borne :  
Oh, go not from us, Lord, we pray ;  
Protect us in our evil day !

The time is dark — we faint with woe ;  
Our foes are mightier far than we,  
They say, " Their God forgets them now—  
And who shall their deliv'rer be ? "  
But rouse thee, Father !—prove thy power,  
And save us at the latest hour !

As she rose from her knees, the bell tolled two, and a few minutes after she heard a loud knocking at the outer gate. She started up in alarm and ran to the window ; the sounds without grew louder and more violent, and she saw by the moonlight a figure glide swiftly along the court, and unbar the door with precipitation, when in an instant the whole space was filled with armed men, whose gestures bespoke no peaceful errand. The glare of torches and the blaze of light beyond showed the features of men of fearful mien, and all doubt of their

hostile intentions was soon dissipated when Alix heard their vociferous exclamations, which appeared but the echo of a howling mob without.

"Down with the Huguenots!" roared a dozen voices; "deliver up the Huguenots! Kill! kill! — it is the King commands!"

"Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed, "they will murder the unfortunate Claude!"

Her first movement was to rush to her father's apartment, where, having gained admittance, she threw herself into his arms, speechless with terror. Alarm and consternation took possession of the mind of Bailly as he heard the loud yells and the approaching footsteps of the ruffian band which had entered his house.

"My child — my Alix!" cried he, "what is this? Are the plots of the Huguenots ripe, and are we to become their victims?"

"Oh, father! father!" cried Alix, "why will you wrong these unfortunate men? — would we were in their hands! But hark! listen to their cries — they approach — they are here! — oh, mercy! mercy!"

A sudden crash was now heard, and the door of the apartment was burst open, giving admittance to a crowd of ferocious-looking men,

at the head of whom the butcher Flé, with a large knife in his hand, such as is used in his trade, and which he brandished fiercely, rushed towards them, and loudly demanded of the President the delivery of his Protestant secretary.

Bailly attempted to speak.

"Your lives are in our hands!" thundered he. "This is no time for words. Where is the accursed Huguenot — the bantling of the Vache de Navarre? Speak, or we spare none in the house!"

"What is your purpose?" demanded the President faintly.

"Extermination to the Huguenots!" cried twenty voices.

Flé advanced to Alix, and laid his huge hand on her delicate arm to drag her from her father, when his action was arrested by the sudden entrance of a man masked, and wrapped in a cloak, on which was a large white cross, similar to those worn by the others.

"Hold, Captain!" he cried, in a voice which vibrated to the heart of Alix; "this is not the chamber: he sleeps not here — we harm no good Catholics. On to the other wing of the house — the Bearnais whelp is there waiting for his fate. The coward hides himself from danger. Follow me!"

As he spoke he darted forward, and all the band, with imprecations and yells, hurried after him.

The room usually occupied by Claude was soon reached, and the door dashed to pieces without delay: with the cry of wolves they sprang towards his bed, and their leader, who was no other than Bianco, brandishing his dagger, cried in a voice hoarse with fury, "Hurra! he escapes me not a second time!" As he spoke he aimed a deadly blow, but what was his amazement to discover that the place was unoccupied, and he had expended his rage in vain. A coarse laugh from his companions added to his passion and confusion.

"Ha! ha! Master René!" cried the facetious dwarf Ancelin, perching himself on the bed's foot, "this is too good a joke; this Huguenot must be one of the devil's kindred, for he takes good care of him. Did none of you see him vanish in a flame of fire as we came in? Who would have thought that the Huguenotaille could foil a Florentine!"

"This is dull work," said Flé, searching the room in vain, while the others clamoured to be gone.

"Hence, then!" cried René; "you will find occupation enough. Leave me to deal with the

doting old man below and his daughter. Away !  
—to your business !”

With tumultuous zeal his comrades hurried into the street, leaving René on his way back to the President's room. Infuriated with disappointment, he no longer attempted disguise, but rushed into the presence of Bailly and his daughter, clamouring vehemently that they should discover to him the retreat of Claude.

“Bianco,” said the President, “I was ignorant of his absence, and have no power to direct you to him.”

“It is false ! — it must be false !” cried René ; “but you seek to protect him in vain. I have sworn to make him my victim, and he shall be so !” Then turning to Alix, whose terror scarcely allowed her to breathe, he continued,—“Alix, do you love your father or this low-bred menial best ? I know his thoughts are raised to you, nor have your mutual glances been lost on me ; but this moment must decide your fate. The mob is at your gates. Hark ! they are massacring on every side !—they pause not to inquire who are their friends ; and when they rush into your house, tell me who will save your father from their fury ? I can do so, and I alone.”

“Oh, save him — save him ! and let me perish only !” shrieked Alix.

"Both shall be safe, but on one condition," he answered. "Your father's word is given; it remained but for you to ratify it. When the murderers return, as they will do,—already I hear them,—their swords and pikes are gleaming in the light of the burning houses,—their shouts are nearer;—do you not hear them?"

"Oh, yes—yes!" cried the terrified girl: "is there no way to save my father? Speak! what can I do to prevent his being butchered in my sight?"

"Acknowledge yourself my wife!" cried René, seizing her wrist and dragging her to the windows, where a frightful spectacle presented itself of flying wretches pursued and hewn down, blood flowing, houses pillaged and on fire, and a hideous noise of voices, loud in fury, shrieks, groans, and bursts of artillery echoing along the air,—

"Say that you are mine," he repeated,—"as mine you must be,—and even yet it is not too late!"

"Never!—never!" shrieked Alix, breaking from him and rushing to her father. "I cannot, father! it is impossible!"

"Then, President, your fate is sealed. I can protect you no longer: your blood be on your daughter's head!"

As René uttered this in a furious tone, a dreadful tumult was heard. The mob was rushing in at every avenue; already they had gained the ante-chamber. "This way — this way!" roared one amongst them; and in another moment the room was filled with a disorderly band of wretches, their faces distorted with the excitement of recent carnage, — their hands and clothes crimson with slaughter, and their words fraught with vengeance.

A blow from the foremost felled the President to the ground; while René stood by, erect and motionless, gazing on the distracted features of his child. Pikes and swords were advanced — a rush was made — and the life of Bailly was not worth a moment's duration, when Alix, desperate with terror and despair, cried, in a loud and piercing tone, "Save my father! — I am the wife of René Bianco!" A shout from René followed her exclamation, — she heard no more, — she saw no more, — a confused murmur of horrid sounds rung in her ears, — a mass of scowling, grinning faces swam before her eyes, — she fell prostrate on the body of her father, and the next instant they were alone, — the band of assassins had quitted the house, — the doors were barred, and René Bianco had disappeared.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE FUGITIVE.

With what grief was my heart then darken'd ! And how did everything I then saw look like death !

ST. AUGUSTIN.

IN a deep embrasure of one of the windows in a chamber of the Queen-mother's apartments at the Louvre sat a party of ladies, looking out upon the moonlight river which glittered at the foot of the tower. These were the young Queen of Navarre and her friends, whose beauty had obtained them the title of the three Graces. Henriette, Duchess de Nevers, Catherine, Princess de Portien, and their younger sister Marie, the bride of Condé. A deep sadness, very unusual with them, overspread the society, occasional monosyllables and suppressed sighs alone interrupting the silence. The suspicion under which the Duke de Guise had fallen of having attempted the life of the Admiral, weighed heavily on the heart of the



pensive Catherine, to whom it was said he was shortly to be united: her sisters shared her sorrow; but that of Marie was combined with a regret for which she felt that time could bring no cure, and the thoughts of Marguerite were undefinable and full of the deepest melancholy. Suddenly the plash of oars was heard, and a small boat was observed approaching the foot of the tower which projected considerably from the body of the building towards the river. It neared the land, and a young cavalier, masked and covered with a large cloak, leaped on shore, and looking up towards the window where so many fair forms were placed, he drew forth a guitar, and after a short prelude of extreme harmony and beauty, sang the following lines:—

Thou art to me less than a shade  
By fragile leaves of autumn made ;  
Less than the note of some lone bird  
'Midst early spring's first whispers heard,  
A weed—a feather on the sea—  
All this, and less, thou art to me !

Why does my trembling fancy dwell  
On all that paints thy form too well,—  
Why see, where'er I turn, thine eyes  
Haunting the streams—the woods—the skies,  
Altho' a place within thy mind  
I know my image cannot find ;  
Less than a kiss in sleep am I,  
Without a claim on memory.

I know all hope thy smile to gain  
Is idle weakness, fond and vain,  
As vain to look for clouds past by,—  
As vain to follow vacancy,—  
Tell me what else is vainer yet  
That this weak heart will not forget !

“ Ah ! ” whispered the Duchess de Nevers, “ it is doubtless ‘ Le beau D’Entragues.’ How imprudent to come here ! Dear Madame Marguerite, your beauty has crazed him, or rather the misfortune of your marriage has made him forget all but his wretchedness. I feared some fatal consequence ; for when he quitted the cathedral he was heard to exclaim, ‘ I have only now to die of regret ! ’ ”

“ Let us retire from the window,” returned the Princess in the same tone, “ poor D’Entragues,—I thought his passion only gallantry, —and indeed, I trust it is no more : he merely follows the fashion of our day, when, like the troubadours of old, it is necessary to an accomplished knight to have a fatal attachment. To love without return is indeed a misfortune ! ”

“ Alas ! ” said the Princess de Condé, “ to love and be separated for ever is despair ; how much I pity him ! ”

“ At this moment, the Queen-mother, the Duchess de Lorraine, the King and his brothers entered the room, and much to the sur-

prise of all, for he was supposed to be justly in disgrace — the Duke de Guise, followed by the Duke de Nevers, Marshal Tavannes, and the Count de Retz.

“How is this?” said Catherine, in a stern voice; “why are you still here, Marguerite? it is fitting that you retire to your chamber, as we have business of importance to consult upon, about which you have no concern;— ladies, I do not require your services further, and request you all to withdraw.”

All those to whom she spoke immediately made their obeisance and left the chamber; but the young Queen of Navarre lingered still, for her sister of Lorraine had taken her hand, and grasping it with a convulsive movement detained her.

Her mother looked angrily towards her, — “Did you hear me, madam,” she exclaimed, “or must I repeat my commands?”

“My dear mother,” said the Duchess of Lorraine in a low voice, “hear me. Consider what you are doing. Is it well to expose poor Marguerite to so much danger? why not allow her to stay here? — there will be little safety in the apartments of Henry of Navarre; you know too well there will not.”

Marguerite had caught the last words, and turning deadly pale, "What is the matter?" said she, "what danger threatens my husband?"

"Silence!" returned Catherine, "I insist upon her going instantly."

Claude de Lorraine burst into a passion of tears, and throwing herself into her sister's arms, cried out, "O God! Marguerite, my dear sister, do not go."

Catherine's brow became livid with rage; "Am I to be braved by children?" she exclaimed. "Come hither, Claude; leave your sister instantly, and attend to what I order."

So saying, she seized the arm of Claude and drew her into a distant part of the room; the young Queen could not overhear their words; but she saw that the one pleaded earnestly, while the other kept an unmoved and stern countenance.

"It is enough — no harm will reach her," was all she heard, while the Duchess once more approaching, kissed her tenderly, and overcome with emotion left the room. Marguerite did the same, leaving her mother with the party who had entered, and who were all in deep discourse, apparently unconscious of the scene which had been going on.

On reaching her apartments the Princess was surprised to find the King of Navarre surrounded by his Huguenot friends, to the number of thirty or forty.

She was received without ceremony, and observed a gloom on the faces of all, which the subject of their conversation sufficiently explained, for they were speaking of the attempt on the Admiral's life, and vehemently insisting that justice should be done by King Charles on the murderer, whom they hesitated not to name as the Duke de Guise.

"He has quitted Paris," said Henry of Navarre; "cowardly assassin as he is, he fears the consequences of his crime: but our vengeance will yet overtake him. I have seen the King but now, and he has solemnly promised to give us audience to-morrow morning, before he attends to any other business. I believe him to be sincere, and doubt not that he will pursue the murderous Guises to the utmost."

Marguerite started; she had left the Duke in the Queen's chamber but a moment, and yet he was represented as at a distance. Why was this deception practised? she trembled to ask herself the question.

She retired into an inner chamber, where her nurse, who was much attached to her, was struck

with the paleness of her countenance, and persuaded her to lie down, which she consented to, but her anxiety prevented her sleeping, for she still heard her husband and his friends in serious and angry discussion. At length, Henry of Navarre entered her chamber, and perceiving her in tears spoke in a kind and gentle tone, and begged her to be comforted, — that all would be well.

“I am going,” said he, “to the *jeu de paume*, with some of my friends, — to sleep is impossible to night; — we shall be ready to wait on the King early in the morning, and I would not have it seem that we are all watching; play will be a sufficient excuse if he should ask for me; let it be known how I am engaged. Adieu, dear Marguerite.”

“She started, and a feeling of astonishment, pleasure, and joy, even to agony, took possession of her senses; she had no words to reply, and he was gone instantly. She rose on her couch and put her hand to her heart, to repress its violent beating — this was the first word of endearment Henry had ever used to her — this was almost the first look of kindness he had given her. Cold, unmoved, and silent, he had appeared to endure her presence, but no more; — she had been nothing to him, but apparently an ob-

ject of aversion, and they met but as cold acquaintances forced upon each other. But he saw her in tears — in tears on his account, and his heart was softened towards the innocent instrument of tyranny which Catherine had placed in his path, as he conceived, as a spy.

He knew little of her he contemned, of her generosity, her noble frankness, her pitying indulgence; her love! yes,— she no longer could conceal it from herself; she loved the husband who neglected her; she adored him who rejected her affection; she, the object of the devotion of so many — for whom d'Entragues's heart was breaking, whom the gallant Bussi lived but to honour; from whom the poets of the time took their inspiration — she, who was called Venus Uranie, — she, who saw princes and potentates at her feet, — loved for the first time, and in vain!

Several hours passed away and her tears flowed on; at length, exhausted with weeping, by degrees sleep stole over her, and she fell back on her pillow, her arm supporting her head. By the side of her couch, her nurse, who believed her to have slumbered long, as she no longer heard her sobs, was reposing quietly. A lamp burnt feebly on a table near, and her book of prayers was open on it, at the passage which

she had read before her eyes closed, "Deliver me, oh my God! out of the hand of the ungodly, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man."

The clock of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois tolled two. A fearful dream disturbed the sleep of the Princess: hideous forms, — flames, — seas of blood, appeared before her eyes. She strove to fly, — to shriek: iron chains seemed to bind her to the spot, — terrible sounds were in her ears as of a violent tumult. She started and woke, but the vision was still there! The sound still echoed round her; and a furious knocking at the door of her chamber roused her nurse, who, with terrified looks, listened while they were repeated with frantic vehemence, accompanied by cries of "Navarre! Navarre!"

"Fly to undo the door!" cried Marguerite: "it is my husband! — some evil has befallen him."

The nurse obeyed, and with trembling hands removed the bolt, when a frightful spectacle presented itself to them — a young man covered with blood, which issued from several wounds, darted wildly into the room, and threw himself at the feet of the young Queen. "I am content," he exclaimed, "since I may die here!"



Marguerite uttered a shriek of horror, and at the same moment her room was filled with guards, who with loud cries rushed, with swords drawn, towards their victim: their faces were fierce, their eyes rolling, and their gestures full of fury. "Down with the Huguenot!—kill, kill!" were the words she heard, as clasping the wretched man in her arms, she covered him with her body.

"Hold, ruffians!" she exclaimed: "traitors! dare you to murder a subject before the eyes of your King's sister!"

"He is a heretic!—give him up to us: it is the King commands," roared the foremost assassin, advancing to seize his prey.

Marguerite, with a movement of compassion which overcame her terror, threw her robe over the kneeling man, who still grasped her firmly round the waist: but another moment would have decided his fate, when a loud voice from without was heard calling to the soldiers to forbear: and Nançay, the Captain of the guard, rushed forward and threw himself between the Princess and the assailants.

"Hence!" he exclaimed. "Idiots, is it here that you waste the precious instants when there are thousands to be dealt with? Away to the lower court, — there the Huguenots are waiting

like sheep to be slaughtered : leave this miscreant to me."

"He waved his hand, and the troop hurried away with vociferous exclamations of fury ; while, turning to Marguerite, he cried, "Madam, it may not be ; all of this accursed race are doomed ! Give up the prisoner, he is condemned to die."

"No, Nançay !" shrieked the Queen :—" disgrace not the name of a brave soldier by such an act. He is under my protection, and none ever sued for it in vain. What means this violence, — these fearful cries, — this horrid outrage ? Against whom do you war, and who are to be your victims ?"

"The Huguenots !" returned he. "This night every Huguenot in Paris, — nay, throughout France, must die ! it is decreed. Hark ! the cannon — the shouts ! — I must to my post. He whom you would preserve, I see, is already dead." As he spoke he dragged the object of his search from the clasp of his protectress : — he had fainted, and gave no sign of life. "Do what you will with him, I ask no questions."

"He was rushing away when Marguerite cried after him, — "For the love of the blessed saints, tell me where is my Henry !"

"Safe," returned the Captain, — "unhurt, in

the King's chamber; but how long he may be so, I know not."

"Conduct me thither I entreat, I implore you!" screamed the Princess. "If mercy ever entered your breast, abandon me not at this moment! — if you have a heart, reject not my prayers!" and she clung to him in agony, her long black hair flowing in waves almost to her feet, her white arms clasping his knees, her dress disordered and stained with blood, and her face pale as ashes.

The rough soldier gave one glance at her prostrate figure; a shudder passed through his frame. "Rise, madam," he exclaimed, "this is no posture for you. Forgive me, and believe while I have an arm to use you shall not be defenceless. I will conduct you to the King's chamber; there use your eloquence and save the devoted princes. Oh, fatal duty! that I must follow commands so cruel and unmanly!"

Marguerite looked back to her nurse, who was supporting the wounded man, entreated her to tend him if he still lived, and, casting off her upper robe which streamed with blood, hastily covered herself with a mantle and followed the steps of Nançay. Yells, loud and horrible, greeted her passage; discharges of artillery and shrieks and groans stunned her as she advanced;

footsteps retreating and pursuing, cries of vengeance and entreaties for pity,—all these sounds came in confused clamours to her ear, as half-dragged along she hurried towards her brother's apartments. The doors of the ante-chamber were open, and from thence rushed a man pursued by soldiers, who, at a few paces from her, pierced his body with their halberds, and he fell, shrieking for mercy, to the ground. The arms of Nançay received her as she sank fainting, but, recovering her strength, she darted forward, and was clasped to her sister's breast.

"Oh! Claude, Claude!" she exclaimed, "where is my husband?" But before an answer could be returned, renewed cries were heard, and De Moissens and D'Armagnac, two of Henry of Navarre's attendants, came flying along the corridor, and took refuge in the room.

"Save us, Princess, save us!" they shrieked; "we are pursued, and have no hope but in you."

In another moment the door was closed and locked by Nançay, and the unfortunate men were kept from those who sought their lives, while Marguerite and her sister flew with the speed of terror through the line of chambers, and, reaching the King's bedchamber, fell almost senseless at the threshold.

There sat Charles the Ninth, with a countenance so ghastly that all vitality seemed passed from him : his eyes rolled frightfully, his mouth was partly open, his lips white, and his nostrils distended ; his hair seemed lifted from his head, and streamed wildly in all directions ; one hand was clenched amongst its locks, and in the other he held an arquebuse. The Queen-mother stood beside him, pale also, but stern, unmoved, and sullen ; her large black eyes, fixed upon him, seemed riveted to his countenance, and appeared to hold him as in a spell : one arm leant upon his shoulder, and one hand grasped him as though an iron band were round his frame : the other hand was raised, and the finger pointed, as if directing his attention to scenes which were beyond his vision. A smile of horrible meaning flitted over her cheek as a fresh peal burst on the stillness of that death-like chamber, and shrill screams pierced the tapestried walls. Henry of Navarre and the Prince of Condé were behind ; one had cast himself on the ground, and tore his hair in agony : the other stood transfixed, having no power to breathe or move : but Marguerite saw that they still lived, and crawling to the footstool of her brother, she cried aloud,—“ Charles, as you hope for eternal salvation, — as you look

for pardon for this horrible crime, save these from massacre and death!" — she pointed to the princes, for her tongue refused to pronounce their names.

"Away, Marguerite, away!" cried Charles wildly. "It is too late — all must fall — there is no safety but in their destruction. Why do you come with that ghastly look to reproach and torture me? The will of Heaven must be performed!"

"Then you will save them — you will save your own soul? Brother, dear brother, have I not loved you, cherished you? — were we not infants together — have not our joys and sorrows been the same? Have I ever wronged you in thought? and how has Henry done so? — has he not confided in you, trusted you with all his people — given himself and them into your hands, and do you repay him with treachery and murder? Turn not from me — you must hear me: never, never will I quit you till you grant me their lives, or, if you refuse it, here on this spot I will remain to be the first victim; and know, Charles, the blood you thus shed of your nearest and dearest will rise against you, and make your future life a scene of perpetual horror. Phantoms will flit around your bed — spirits of vengeance will shriek in your

ears, as do my accents now, and you will die in tortures, without hope of mercy !”

“Hold, frantic woman !” cried the King, starting up and bursting from the hold of Catherine; “distract me not with these denunciations. Navarre, Condé, fly to your chambers — avoid my sight, lest I repent: you are safe. Nançay, take heed the princes are unharmed; set guards upon them, but let their lives be sacred as my own. The rest,” he hurriedly continued, “the rest shall fall—yes, by my own hand ! Fear not, mother; your counsel shall be followed. My aim shall be sure; the enemies of God shall flee before me !”

So saying, he grasped the instrument of destruction which he held, rushed to the open window, and fired, crying out with the gestures of a maniac, as he reloaded his gun, “Kill ! kill ! down with the enemies of God !”

## CHAPTER XIX.

LES MATINES DE PARIS.

There lay Duncan,  
His silver skin laced with his golden blood !  
SHAKESPEARE.

THE Cordelier, on quitting Nantouillet, hurried along the quay, and, taking a boat, passed the river. The boatman, he observed, made a sign to him as they parted, which he did not understand, and he felt somewhat uneasy in perceiving that he looked after him with a glance of very sinister expression as he stepped out of the boat, and he saw him whispering to some of his comrades, but heard not their words.

The Rue de Bethizy, where the Admiral resided, was not so soon gained as he had hoped, for he found the streets crowded with soldiers, and met groups of men of the lowest classes, who seemed parading up and down in riotous confusion, unrepressed by any authority. He

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contrived to push through the crowd, and had nearly arrived at the door he sought, when some men with torches rushed along, and he was obliged to stand up and let them pass; but as he did so, the light, flashing upon his face, discovered him distinctly to those who were advancing.

“Ha! the Huguenot Cordelier, by Notre Dame!” cried a voice close to him; and looking up, he saw his assailant on a late occasion, Crucé, the butcher of the faubourg St. Jacques. He was accompanied by men in a variety of costume, evidently foreign; but their leader’s countenance he required but one glance to recognize as that of Captain Florio: the recollection of the Italian appeared to be quite as quick, to judge by the exclamation of surprise which he made. Crucé bounded forward, and would have seized the monk, had not the latter at the same instant caught a torch from the hand of the foremost, which he thrust full in the face of the butcher. A loud laugh from some, and exclamations from several of the party, echoed along the street, and attracted the notice of a group of students who were passing. Always ready for a fray, they hurried to the scene of action, and found their old acquaintance the Cordelier struggling with the

infuriate Crucé, who, enraged at the laughter of his companions, and half blinded by the flame, was rendered perfectly furious. The monk, however, was a man nearly as tall, and apparently as powerful as his enemy, and dealt blows in all directions, as he stood with his back against a door, and kept his assailants at bay.

"Give way!" cried the student Belcastel, rushing forward, followed by his friends. "Come on, comrades; we owe this monk some reparation, and though he is a Cordelier, we will not see him overpowered by numbers. St. Germain! St. Germain! to the rescue!"

So saying, they commenced a vigorous assault on the torchbearers, and cries and blows resounded on all sides. Florio meantime had approached the monk, and as his arm was raised to keep off one of the mob, slid close to him, and suddenly drawing a dagger from his vest stabbed him in the shoulder. The steel must have entered his side, but that Belcastel's hand interposing, prevented the stroke taking effect.

"Fly! you are wounded," cried Belcastel; "leave us to deal with these ruffians: we are many, and you will only lose your life if you stay."

As he spoke, a patrol of several soldiers had arrived at the spot, and one amongst them, who, by his dress, appeared to belong to the Court, called out in an authoritative tone,—

“Fools ! disperse instantly, — have you forgotten my orders? — the hour has not struck, you will spoil all. Young gentlemen,” he added, turning to the students, “what means this licence? why do you attack peaceful citizens in the streets? will you always be causing disturbances by your turbulence? Soldiers, make them your prisoners !”

“We will see that !” exclaimed Belcastel; “fly, my friends, we can show them it is not so easy to catch as to command.”

The crowd which had gathered round during this tumult gave way instantly, to afford a passage for their favourites, who, though prone to create disturbances, were, nevertheless, generous, and their spirit and courage made them generally liked. Several of the people cried out as they barred the passage of the soldiers, “Down with the Italians ; — what do we want with Italians? — who made the Queen’s prisoner a general? — Is it René Bianco who drugged the Queen of Navarre? — Long live King Charles — Confusion to Catherine !” and amidst similar shouts and derisive epithets, René con-

tinued his way to the palace, while the active students contrived to elude their pursuers, and the Cordelier, taking advantage of the confusion, hastened on, and soon found himself before the gate of the Admiral's abode.

There he found himself in the midst of contention once more. Several men, who were carrying suits of armour and swords into the hall of the house, were arrested by Cosseins, the captain of the guard, placed there by the King, as a supposed protection against any attempt from the Guises. He insisted that no one should enter, and that his orders were strict to prevent it. The Sieur de Guerchy, who accompanied the armour-bearers, passionately contended for admission, and some of his people proceeded to endeavour to force their entrance; the Cordelier joining them, sought an opportunity of slipping in unobserved; but his habit appeared to give offence to those who knew him not as a friend, and he was repulsed by them. At this time Teligni came forth from the house, and in his usual gentle and calm manner requested that all parties would refrain from violence, for that the Admiral, who was much recovered, was sleeping, and the noise might do him injury.

At his soft and persuasive voice the tumult ceased, for Teligni was so much adored by

his own people, and so respected by the Catholics, that he was always listened to with attention.

"I am returning," said he, "to my own house close by—should the Admiral ask for me let me instantly be informed." He spoke to Labonne, the first valet of the Admiral, who had attended him to the door. The monk made an attempt to approach Teligni, but was rudely thrust back by those who were near. Almost despairing of his purpose, he now addressed himself to Labonne, who, recognizing him as having before visited his master, called to Cosseins to allow him to enter, who offered no opposition, imagining that he admitted one of his own party, who, he thought, might be useful in the interior of the mansion.

At length, then, the Cordelier found himself within the walls; but the attendants refused to admit him to Coligni, who was asleep. "Is the Vidame de Chartres still here?" asked the monk.

"He left but half an hour ago," was the reply.

"My friends," said the Cordelier, "I come to warn him, you, and all of danger—fearful, dreadful danger; the night wears on, and scarcely an hour is between you and your fate. Do not disbelieve my word. I am your friend, and

the friend of the Admiral; let him be placed in a litter, and conveyed away to any obscure part of the town — let him cross the river, and before the gates are closed he may yet escape.”

“Madness!” exclaimed Paré the surgeon, who was near; “he is unable to bear it; and why should you doubt the King’s protection? His guards and those of Navarre surround us. I am sent here by his Grace expressly to attend to the patient. There is no danger. We are aware of the intentions of De Guise, and are prepared to meet any attack.”

“Oh, my good father!” said the sieur de Bouchavannes, “we are in no fear; so long as there are no traitors in the house, the Admiral is safe.”

He said this with a suspicious glance at the Cordelier, which was not long in being understood by those round. Several daggers were drawn from the girdles of the bystanders, and imprecations uttered against any who would seek to betray their master.

“O God!” said the monk, “will nothing persuade you — and will you remain to be a sacrifice? — Hear me, infatuated men! I came through dangers and difficulties innumerable, to warn you while there might be yet time. A plot is on foot to massacre all the Huguenots in

Paris; at a given signal every man is to rise against his neighbour, and a general carnage must ensue."

"And why do you, a Catholic, wish to save us? what cause has a Cordelier to be the friend of the Protestants?" asked Bouchavannes.

"I am not what I seem," cried the monk, throwing back his cowl: "my life may be the forfeit of the discovery; but there is no other means of convincing you. You, Jolet, faithful servant of the Admiral, cannot but remember me. Alas! was it not you who handed me the fatal spear on that unlucky day which has caused all my misfortunes and those of France?"

Jolet, the confidential attendant, with Labonne, on Coligni, pressed forward as he heard these words, and with a loud cry threw himself at the feet of the monk exclaiming,—

"De Montgomery! is it possible? Oh, my lord,—my dear lord! do I behold you again?"

A general astonishment took possession of all. Montgomery, anxious that no time should be lost, entreated that precautions might be taken in case of any attempt at surprise, and informed them that his intention now was to hasten back to the faubourg St. Germain in hopes to be able to give warning to others of

the Huguenot chiefs who resided in that quarter.

He accordingly descended the stairs, proposing to make his way to the river as speedily as possible, but was stopped as he attempted to cross the court by the Swiss guard, who proclaimed to him that their orders were to allow no one either to go out or in during the remainder of the night; that it was now nearly midnight, and at daybreak every one would be at liberty.

"There is nothing for us but patience," said M. de Bouchavannes: "meanwhile, we may as well go to rest. There can be no danger with such vigilant guards as surround us."

At this moment the bell of the invalid rang, and his attendants hastened to him. Montgomery, though unwilling to agitate him, thought it better that he should be prepared in case of any tumult, and desired to be announced. He found him in bed, but considerably better, although unable to use his arm. He communicated to him what he had heard from the Prévôt; but the Admiral refused to give credit to the idea of the King's being privy to the plot, as indeed Montgomery himself was far from believing. He, however, rose, and covering himself with a nightgown, summoned



Merlin the Protestant minister to read prayers in his room, in which act of devotion Montgomery joined.

With fervour and pious earnestness the good Admiral returned thanks to God for his late preservation, and offered up prayers for the good of France, and the cause of the reformed religion, supplicating that those of the opposite belief might be led into the right way, and entreating pardon for all his enemies.

He had just finished his devotional exercise when a knocking was heard without, and he ordered Labonne to inquire its meaning. He soon returned, explaining that it was a messenger from the King, who desired instant admission to the Admiral.

"Lose no time, Labonne," said Coligni; "take the keys and give him admittance."

Labonne descended, and having placed the key in the lock, turned it with difficulty, for there seemed a pressure on the outside. "Stand away," said he; "I cannot open the door if you press against it thus."

He turned the key, the door flew wide open, and in an instant the dagger of Cosseins was buried in his heart.

In rushed the assailants with frightful cries, led by René Bianco. They darted forward as

he, who seemed to have the direction of the party, exclaimed,—

“ I will guide you !—this way — this way to the apartments of the Admiral ! ”

On hearing the confusion without, the Swiss guards of the King of Navarre, who were posted within, as they were to be included in the intended massacre, closed the iron gate which led to the inner court ; but Captain Cossein, bringing up his men, ordered them to fire through, which they did instantly, and two out of the five were killed. Cornaton, who, though deputed by the King, was not aware of the meditated treachery, commanded his people to pile coffers and chests, and all the heavy furniture they could find against the inner door.

While they were thus engaged, Cossein, who had succeeded in forcing the iron gate, and had killed the rest of the guard, clamoured for admittance, proclaiming that he acted by the King's command ; but Cornaton answered,—

“ I was set here as a guard, not as an assassin,” and refused to obey.

A furious attack was now made by those outside, and the barricade proved too weak to resist. With a terrific crash the door gave way, and the troop rushed into the body of the house.

The noise of all this affray rose to the Admiral's ears, and he felt that his last hour was come. Merlin darted to the door, and saw the servants flying in all directions. He returned to his master, exclaiming, "God summons us to himself!"

Montgomery was unarmed: he looked at his friend in agony, and saw no change in his face, —the same calm look of resignation, the same benevolent smile.

"It is all over with me," he said. "Fly, my friend, and save a life precious to our cause. Endeavour to warn our chiefs; they will not neglect your warning as I did: but it was too late. This deed has been long resolved on. The murderers are at hand. Farewell!"

"No," cried Montgomery: "I may yet defend you; this garb may be some protection. Are there no arms — nothing for resistance?"

As he spoke, he seized a small sword, which was the only defensive weapon in the chamber, and which was merely a slight ornamental one; this he concealed beneath his robe, and awaited the arrival of the murderers, who came on with furious shouts.

A peal of fire-arms told that the faithful servants of the Admiral were falling in every di-

rection. "Fly, Merlin!" I insist: "Montgomery, fly!" cried the Admiral.

Panic-stricken, and feeling that their lives must be sacrificed if they remained, all fled from the chamber by a concealed door which led to a tower, and to the upper part of the house, and Montgomery remained with the devoted Coligni alone.

The murderers by this time had reached the door of the Admiral's sleeping apartment, where their thundering strokes were heard mingled with commands that it should be opened.

The stillness of death was within: there sat the wounded chief of a hundred battles, weak and faint, and unable to lift the arm which had so many times wielded a sword terrible to his enemies: beside him the gallant Montgomery, once the most accomplished cavalier of his time, the hero of his party, the beloved of the fair, — with no weapon but a sword, which was only made to figure by the side of a carpet knight, having no means besides of defence, with the certainty of beholding his friend's death, and anticipating his own. He had in the hurry of the instant barricaded the door with every article of weight he could find in the room, — had dragged the table and a large

coffer towards it, but he was aware that he could thus gain but little delay; the repeated blows told him that the door could not long resist, and in effect it gave way, and the white, green, and black uniforms of the Duke of Anjou's Swiss guards gleamed in the torch light.

There were a few steps leading up to the chamber, and by main force Montgomery contrived to hurl down the foremost of the ruffians, who was no other than Bianco: he fell on his companions, and was for a moment stunned. The others rushed on, headed by a German named Besme, who in his jargon called aloud for the Admiral. Attin, a domestic of the Duke d'Aumale, pressed in next with his drawn sword, and made a rush at the Admiral.

"Hold, miscreants!" cried Montgomery: "respect his grey hairs. Cowards, he is unarmed!"

Attin drew back with a shudder as he gazed on the Cordelier. "'Tis St. Francis himself!" he exclaimed.

"Fool!" roared Besme; "Down with the Huguenot! What is the meddling priest to us!" Then, advancing towards Coligni, while Montgomery struggled with him in vain, he called out, "Are you the Admiral?"

"I am," said Coligni with a calm accent.

"You ought to respect my age and infirmity; but it is but shortening my life a little more — that is all!"

Cosseins at this juncture darted into the room. "The Duke de Guise is impatient below," cried he. "Is not the deed done yet?"

It was enough. Besme gave one spring and buried his steel in the Admiral's body.

"Thank God, he is not a Frenchman!" cried Montgomery.

With a violent effort he threw off Attin, and as he did so the grasp of René held him hard. With the handle of his broken sword he struck at him, and as he was exclaiming, "Kill the disguised Huguenot! — Kill the traitor Montgomery!" once more felled him to the ground, and leaping over his prostrate body, darted through the tapestried door up the tower steps, and found himself in a long corridor at the top of the house. Onward he flew, following the way the other fugitives had taken, and reaching a small window, contrived to force himself through it. As he did so a heavy beam fell close to the spot he had quitted, and nearly blocked up the passage behind him. Feeling that by this accident his pursuers would find some difficulty in following him, he continued his perilous way, for he was now on the roof

of a house which shelved in a fearful manner towards the street. By sliding down the side of a chimney he reached a lower flat roof, and paused a moment, when he heard yells and shouts below, around, behind him. Which way to fly he knew not — to advance or to retreat appeared equally fraught with danger; yet to remain where he was, was impossible.

A shot sent after him struck the chimney near which he leant; and nerved by despair he made a leap onwards. He had scarcely observed where he was directing his attempts, and when he lighted on his knees he looked round with horror: between him and the spot on which he last stood was a fearful chasm, deep, dark, and jagged with the projecting fronts of houses and roofs,—the division, in fact, of two narrow streets. Across this ravine he had leapt, and found himself now clinging to the slippery roof of a house much lower than that he had just quitted in so unpremeditated a manner. He scrambled up, breathless and faint, and staggered on, for a glance showed him that his pursuers had paused at the opening, which they could not attempt to pass, and he thought a few more efforts might ensure his safety. Their bullets still rattled on the slates, and rebounded from the chimneys; but so rapid

were his movements that they failed to reach him.

Before him was a high pile of buildings; if he could gain that he would be lost to view. He advanced crawling on his hands and knees: he felt that he was covered with blood from the wound in his shoulder, and the blows he had received from Attin. Blinded and exhausted, he made one desperate struggle, one spring, and fell senseless down a yawning gulf which seemed open to receive him.



## CHAPTER XX.

## BROTHERLY LOVE.

Oh that it were to do !—what have we done ?

SHAKESPEARE.

CLAUDE, and his companion in captivity, remained for several hours in their unavoidable solitude tortured with agonising fears, and hearing around them the din of fire-arms, the tolling of bells, the shrieks and groans of the victims, and the vociferations of their assailants. Claude sought by every means to look upon that which chilled his heart with horror, vainly hoping to see some succour arrive to the unfortunate Huguenots. He stood chained, as it were, to the casement which had revealed to him the frightful scene beneath, and gazing with an eagerness which might have exposed him to observation, but for the heavy stone ornaments which partially concealed his figure from those

without; while the thick drapery within, nearly torn down in his agonised attempts to force the door close to him, shut him almost from the sight of those within the room. He had cause to congratulate himself on the latter circumstance; for he presently heard a key turn in the lock of the antechamber, and he had only time to shrink still more closely to the wall, when a figure advanced into the room where he was, covered with a long, dark cloak, which cautiously approached the spot where Mabilley lay, still nearly in a state of insensibility.

This was a man of tall stature, somewhat bent, but not by age; for Claude perceived when he stooped and dropped the mantle from his shoulders that he was not more than two or three and twenty. His head was considerably inclined on one side; and this well-known peculiarity, joined to a certain dignity in his air, induced Claude to imagine that he had seen him before; and the full view he caught of his features, discovering an aquiline nose, pallid cheeks, and eyes whose remarkably fierce expression was rather softened at the instant, and which were of a clear hazel, inclining to yellow, whether from constitution or temporary agitation of mind, convinced Claude that it was Charles IX. who stood before him.

"Mabille," he said, in a low voice, "are you safe?"

She raised her head at the words, and gazing with a look of wildness and astonishment, met his glance. She started up, and catching him in her arms, exclaimed, —

"My child! — my son! are you then spared to me — to France? What meant the tumult of last night? — what mean the frightful sounds which yet ring in my ears? — how have you escaped the traitorous Guises? Oh! when will you be warned against those bitter enemies? — when will you believe in, and beware of, their wicked designs?"

Charles returned her caresses with much affection, but smiled as he answered, — "You are deceived, Mabille, my dear nurse, the Guises are my good friends: they have this night done me good service. Coligni — the traitor Coligni — lies pierced with a thousand wounds beneath my chamber window. All my foes will be exterminated, — the accursed Huguenots are slaughtered like sheep in the streets of Paris; but I would not give up my nurse, — the only creature who loves me in the world, — though my mother would have sacrificed you with the rest."

"What import have these appalling words?"

said the nurse, shuddering. "Can my ears have heard aright, that murderers, licensed by an inhuman king, have dared to lay hands on his innocent subjects?"

"The devoted people," answered Charles, sternly, "are swept from my land, too long polluted by their impiety, and treason is at an end. I trust in God none have escaped. It is cruel to show clemency towards them, — it is clemency to be cruel."

A cold tremour crept over Claude as he listened. He held his breath, and stood without allowing himself the slightest motion, as he rightly judged that Mabile was the only object of the King's mercy, and his discovery and death would probably have taken place at the same time.

The nurse looked on Charles with a fixed and severe countenance.

"Why, then, did you save me, barbarous Prince?" said she: "what is my worthless life, when the servants of God are slaughtered by the unrighteous? A curse will fall on the heads of all concerned in this deed: they shall perish from the land, and their inheritance shall pass away. 'Whoso slayeth by the sword shall perish by the sword!' they shall be tormented in this life with remorse, and every

worldly evil shall overtake them, and they shall die in the agonies of despair, without hope in the eternal mercy of the Lord !”

“ Say not so, woman, — say not so !” interrupted Charles, trembling: “ they are a sacrifice for the nation’s good, — they are justly punished for rebellion and wickedness.”

“ They are murdered !” exclaimed Mabille, looking undauntedly at him; “ and their murderers are accursed !”

“ Nurse,” said Charles, his lip quivering as he spoke. “ Reproach me not, I cannot bear it ! My mind is confused — distracted ! and I can little endure harshness from you, above all, whom, against my conscience, I have saved ! Irritate me not, lest I forget the affection which induced me to preserve you ! Follow me instantly and be silent ! None shall molest you ; but beware of urging me too far.”

Mabille followed the King into his closet, where, having thrown himself into a seat, he desired her to remain in attendance upon him.

“ I am,” said he, “ very uneasy. The agitation of last night has so much excited my spirits, that I fear I shall suffer in consequence : but first, I had forgotten your long fast. We have made you a good Catholic in spite of yourself. Eat, good Mabille, and recover your

looks. Nay, do not attempt to refuse; you are as pale as fear, and I must have merry faces round me——now !”

As he pronounced the last word, his voice faltered, and he turned away, making a signal for Mabilie to approach a table on which was placed refreshments.

She obeyed, and though almost choked with tears, endeavoured to swallow some necessary nourishment, thinking meanwhile on the situation of Claude, and on the means of relieving him, which appeared difficult, considering the commands she had received from the King to stay where she was.

Charles remained for some time silent and lost in thought; nor was he roused from his reverie till a page entered announcing the approach of the Queen-mother. The King started from his seat.

“How !” cried he, “said I not that I would be alone?”

“Her Grace commanded me to announce her entrance,” faltered the page. Charles impatiently motioned him to withdraw, and taking Mabilie’s hand, led her to an adjoining chamber.

“Stay here,” said he, “till my mother has departed. So saying, he left her, and she be-

came an involuntary witness of the interview which followed.

"I behold you, my son," said Catherine, "after our victory, and I come to offer you my congratulations. Henceforth we may lay down our heads in peace, confident in our own safety, and in having performed a duty to God."

Charles muttered a reply which was scarcely audible; his artful mother instantly perceived the vacillating state of his mind, and hastened to add:

"You, my son, deserve the thanks of all good Catholics, for the part you have taken in this glorious sacrifice; they tell me your aim was unerring as you marked from your window the flying wretches who were delivered into our hands. It was truly a sublime sight to behold the ungodly scattered like autumn leaves before the whirlwind of Heaven's wrath."

"It was! it was!" almost shrieked Charles, a livid hue overspreading his face, as he raised his clenched hands, "and Heaven knows my zeal in its cause. I fired long and steadily; though my carbine could not always reach the villains, yet I did execution. I saw them butchered round me by my faithful Swiss. I saw them sink in the waters of the Seine, whose tide was all of blood, — I heard their shrieks

louder than the cannon — their starting eyes, as they looked up vainly for mercy, were brighter than the torches' flame, — hundreds and hundreds I saw fall, for they were brought to my gates to be offered up — here ! here — even in my very chambers they were pierced by the daggers of the righteous. It was a great, an immortal deed ! Yet," he continued wildly, pacing the room, and casting his arms above his head, "where is my reward, mother ? what prize has Heaven in store for me ? when will come my hour of content, of happiness ? I have had my desire upon my enemies ; I have done — you say I have done well ; but I tell you, mother, there is distraction in my brain ; remorse — remorse, and worse than death in my soul ! "

The wretched Prince cast himself upon a seat, and covered his face with his hands ; Catherine's pale brow grew dark as she said :

" Our act is holy : has not Heaven manifested its approval by signs and wonders ? A dead and withered thorn in which there was no sap left, and which had been condemned to be rooted up in the cemetery of the Innocents, this morning has sent out blossoms which perfume the whole air, and continue to spring forth in the very sight of men, amazing all beholders."

" Wonderful ! " exclaimed Charles, listening



eagerly. "I will visit it; I will myself see this prodigy!"

"Yes, my son," continued Catherine, "and to Montfaucon we will go together, where our arch enemy is now suspended by the heels, like an unclean animal, for the diversion of our loyal people."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Charles, "is it so? — it must be a curious spectacle. We will take Navarre and Condé to this pastime; how they will delight in it! Old Coligni — I promised he should have justice; he has it now!"

Catherine perceived that the mirth of the King was far from real, and dreading that he should relapse into regret, went on quickly.

"Yes, Heaven has delivered them all an easy prey; the work still goes on, and thousands more will fall. Men shall see the divine will accomplished, and tremble at divine judgment. We are chosen as ministers, and shall we dare to repine and repent, when we should rejoice that all is accomplished! Be but yourself, my son, and let no idle, human weakness conquer your zeal for Heaven's good."

"You say well, madam," said the King; "all our vows are fulfilled, and one of your nearest and dearest wishes is but now accomplished. You will hear with delight, I know," he added

sneeringly, "that your long-desired project for my brother Anjou has succeeded. My despatches of this day inform me that the Poles have elected him for their King, and are impatient to hail the arrival, in their delightful country, of their new sovereign. You hear the tidings with joy as I expected," he continued, smiling bitterly, for Catherine, overcome by the unexpected communication of an event which she dreaded, though forced by policy not only to affect approval, but required to exert her interest to bring about — sank back into her chair, her countenance suddenly changing.

"Alas ! is it possible !" exclaimed she, quite off her guard.

"What more probable, Madam?" said Charles; "did you not desire it ardently? did not both you and he entreat me to further your views in that quarter? You praise my zeal in some cases, do so now, I beg — yes, — I rejoice to say, and I am sincere in my joy, that my efforts have been successful."

Catherine's eyes filled with tears, an unusual occurrence with her.

"He must leave us then," said she; "we shall lose the brightest ornament of our Court."

"I feign no sorrow, madam," returned her son; "when Anjou is gone I shall perhaps have

less reason to regret my mother's want of regard towards her eldest son. See, where the King of Poland comes to hear from your own lips the news of his elevation."

As he spoke, the Duke of Anjou entered; he paid his devoirs respectfully to his brother, who made no return to his salutation. Catherine hastened to meet and embrace him, exclaiming as she did so, — "Dearest Henry, let me be the first to hail you as a king,—the King of Poland. The object of our wishes is gained, thanks to the anxious care of King Charles: let your first act be to pay him homage for your kingdom."

Notwithstanding the significant glances which she bestowed on her favourite son, and her secret pressure of his hand as a warning to him to restrain the feelings of vexation which she was well aware that this unwelcome intelligence would create, Anjou, unable to curb his impetuosity, cried out —

"My sentence of banishment is then pronounced: I am to be outlawed amongst savages, and debarred from civilized communication!"

"Henry," said the Queen, "what means this ingratitude, — this sudden change in your opinions?"

"No, madam," he replied fiercely, "there

is no change: you well know my aversion to this appointment; my brother knows it also; and it is but mockery to announce it as though it were news I should hear with pleasure."

"I see plainly," said Charles, sarcastically, "that mother and son must depart together; your hearts are so united, that it were cruelty to divide them: but know, both of you, that I have long seen through the slight veil which is now thrown partially aside, and which, I am aware, conceals designs deep and dangerous. I know your lukewarm wishes, your pretended anxiety to obtain, but real wish to avoid, the crown of Poland, — which gained, the actors in various intrigues would be too widely separated. I tell you that these schemes have not deceived me. I, however, acted with more truth, and what I ordered was done with all my heart: my ambassadors have exerted all their influence and eloquence, have represented my brother as just, wise, merciful, and prudent, and they have succeeded. The kingdom of Poland is yours, with subjects ready to obey and idolize you, — almost as much," he said with a sneer, "as you are adored in France. For myself, — last night disposed of many of my enemies; to-day I have the prospect of losing another."

"My son," interposed the Queen-mother,

who began to fear the consequences of the anger of Charles, whose spirit and quickness surprised and alarmed her, "what do I hear? Can you consider your brother Anjou as an enemy? — say rather you meant that childish Alençon, who wept to see your enemies fall, — while Henry has proved his zeal and fidelity to the utmost. Who more earnestly advised the present salutary measure than he? Who more desires the extermination of your foes? Let me behold you friends — let me see you brothers — nor cloud the joy of this moment with idle dissensions."

"Talk not of joy, madam," cried Charles, starting up furiously, — "talk of despair, of horror, of cruel treachery! This deed of ours can bring no joy. Well might Alençon weep! — why did not I, when Marguerite lay groaning at my feet, — when Navarre and Condé begged for mercy, — when Coligni—— Oh, God! my brain is on fire when I reflect on it! What am I but a murderer? — a cold, calculating, miserable wretch, acted upon by others, and abandoned to eternal infamy by an act at which the princes of Europe will shudder, — from which the world will recoil. The blood that now rushes through every vein of my body is burning with the fever of remorse! You counselled,

you urged me to the commission of a crime so deadly, that every hour of my future existence will be embittered by the hideous vision of it — and you dare to talk to me of joy !”

“Your Grace felt, methinks, but little remorse or pity,” said Anjou, scornfully, “when you marked the Huguenotaille from the window of the gallery, and your sure aim proved how little their cries could make your nerves unsteady !”

“Silence — forbear !” cried Catherine, sternly ; “the King is ill, — is weak, — and events have so crowded upon him that he is not himself. He will not long permit this idle compassion for undeserving rebels to disturb his quiet and unsettle his temper thus.”

“Yes,” muttered Charles, recovering himself, while a new expression spread itself over his features, — “yes, they were rebels and traitors, and their fate was merited. Let no one blame me for their punishment.”

“None will, — none can, my son,” replied Catherine : “they would have overturned the state, destroyed our holy faith, and sacrificed us and our people. Raise not phantoms to harass your mind. Does the judge reproach himself for having pronounced sentence on the criminal ? No more, my dearest Charles, —

calm yourself, and chase away these visions. I will send you a draught to soothe and comfort you, which Bianco shall prepare."

Catherine had tenderly approached him as she spoke, and was supporting his head on her shoulder; but as she pronounced the name of Bianco, the King wildly exclaimed,— "Name him not—his drugs are fatal! they have already proved their potency too well. His zeal, too, is misdirected; he has killed my clockmaker, a man of great value to me, and allowed his shop to be pillaged: it is a cruel loss, which I shall be long in replacing. Madam, I request,—nay, I insist on that man's removal—his sight is noxious to me: he shall not be suffered about the court. I had purposed ordering his absence, and you remind me of it in good time."

Catherine replied haughtily, "Does your Grace intend regulating my household in future? Am I not to be a free agent even in what concerns my private affairs? This is, methinks, somewhat too much of disrespect towards your mother and a princess. I take my leave of your Grace, and trust that when perfectly restored to health you will be less unreasonable, and less disposed to offer insult where honour is due."

So saying, the Queen-mother rose, and, ac-

accompanied by the new king of Poland, quitted the presence of Charles.

She despatched immediately to him his Jesuit confessor, Edmond Auger, rightly judging that he would be the most proper person to allay the irritation of the King's mind by his arguments and sophistry. Accordingly the utmost eloquence and cunning were brought into action against the scruples which conscience and reason suggested, and so well did the Jesuit succeed, that the mind of Charles became gradually calmer, and when Auger took his leave the King returned to the closet where he had placed Mabile, and desired her to return to her own apartments, to send to him his physician Ambroise Paré, and to hold herself in readiness to remain with him during the night.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE RESPITE.

I would 'twere but a dream—then there were hope  
I might be once awake—and so see day.  
But night is lodg'd within me, night perpetual  
Darker than the Cimmerian !

HEYWOOD.

It became evident to Mabile that there was no safety for Claude but in his concealment, and on her return she communicated to him what had passed in the King's chamber.

"Your life," said she, "has been saved only through an accidental visit to me, for the warning I received is now too well explained, though it probably pointed to no one particular person. For Alix I trust we need not entertain apprehension: her father is known as a bigoted Papist, and her secret profession is unsuspected."

"But," interrupted Claude, "may I not attempt to discover the truth? Of what use is

my wretched life if I may not risk it for her sake !”

“ Be patient,” returned Mabilie ; “ there will be risk enough hereafter. No one could quit the walls of the Louvre at present but with a prospect of certain death. The rest of this fearful night I am to remain with the King. I will use all my endeavours to make him revoke his cruel sentence, to induce him to stay the fury of these wretches to whom the Protestants are given up as a prey ; and with the blessing of Heaven I shall succeed. Remain, therefore, for a few more hours here, and I trust to bring you tidings of enlargement.”

However unwilling Claude was to agree to this, he felt that there was no remedy, and consented to submit, acknowledging the justice of Mabilie's reasoning. She procured for him some necessary refreshment, and entreating him to be cautious and patient led him to the most retired part of her suite of apartments, which he readily promised to secure within from all intrusion, and then, after bidding her adieu, he threw himself on a bed, and, exhausted with watching and distress of mind, was soon buried in sleep.

Far otherwise was it with Charles : he lay in agonies of body and mind, which no remedies

appeared to relieve. He started at the slightest sound, and turned his wandering eyes constantly in quest of Mabile, fearing to lose sight of her for an instant.

As the night advanced he became still more restless and uneasy; and when the bell tolled two, his agitation grew to an alarming height: he gasped for breath; his features were distorted with fear; he clung to Mabile in uncontrolled terror and exclaimed —

“They are there! The ghastly shadows flit all around me! I cannot keep them from my sight! What seas of blood are before me! Where are you, Mabile? My dear and only friend, do not desert me! do not quit me! I saved you; pray for mercy on my soul! I followed a dreadful counsel—was worked upon,—urged,—forced to consent. My mother, she it was whose artful representations and threats forced me to this act. Is there any hope of pardon for a wretch like me?”

“My dear child,” said the nurse, tenderly, “despair not, nor weep so bitterly; it rends my heart to see you thus; be assured that there is store of mercy for sinners who repent. On those who counselled this deed will the judgment of Heaven fall. Fear not, my son; the King of all the world is all-forgiving, and will

not disdain your penitence. For me, who owe my life to your clemency, I am bound to pray, and will ever pray for your pardon and consolation, though the crime be indeed deadly which you have been led to commit."

"I could have saved others, and I allowed all to be sacrificed!" sobbed the unfortunate young man. "Poor La Rochefoucauld! We had played together till near midnight. I bade him beware, as I should rouse him in the night to take my revenge for his success. He left me with a jest, and they murdered him in my name! Poor La Rochefoucauld! so cheerful, so merry! Oh God! stabbed with a thousand wounds!—and Teligny, the mildest, gentlest, most confiding of human creatures, to the last asserted my innocence of the massacre! Oh that my list were not all of murders!"

He sank back on his pillow.

"Sire," said Mabile, "take comfort; Ambroise Paré, you know, is saved, and ready to serve you still; and doubtless many others. One I can name whose prayers will join with mine for his deliverer."

"How, Mabile?" said the King, a ray of pleasure brightening his pallid cheek: "whom do you mean? But perchance it is to Navarre that you allude. My sister's tears saved him,

even when I was mad with the fury of slaughter. Oh God ! they must have used some sorcery to make me what I am. Bianco has wondrous power, and may have given me potions !”

“ Thank Heaven !” cried Mabile, falling on her knees and not heeding his last remark, “ Henry, then, yet lives !”

“ Yes,” said Charles ; “ and Condé. But tell me, nurse, of whom then spoke you but now ?”

“ If your Grace will promise that he shall be in safety, I will disclose the secret,” answered she.

“ Doubt me not !” exclaimed the King, half rising. “ You take a load from off my heart. I would not cause another death to purchase half the universe !”

Mabile then, happy to afford relief to his distracted mind, and aware of the ascendancy which she possessed over him, ventured to relate the circumstances of Claude's escape through the means which Charles himself had used for her preservation. As she recounted the particulars he became more calm ; sometimes he smiled at her dilemma, and by degrees his mood grew happier.

She now thought it a favourable moment to ask if he had given orders respecting the continuance of the persecutions, pleading so earnestly

and eloquently, that Charles, entirely overcome, summoned some of his officers, and, with the promptitude and rapidity which characterised him, issued his commands that the massacre should forthwith cease; that strict injunctions should be laid on the Huguenots to keep close in their houses till the excitement was over, and that any infringement of these positive commands should be punished severely.

Having done this, and dismissed his astonished servants, he returned to his couch, and desiring Mabile to keep her friend concealed till she had his permission to liberate him, soon after fell into a profound sleep, while she watched by him with all the patience of affection.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE SERMON.

A Daniel come to judgment—yea, a Daniel !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE pretty little village of Rosiers, not far from Paris, had boasted for some time a famous Protestant preacher, whose eloquence was so great and his arguments so sound, that he had gained the victory more than once over the most subtle and learned Doctors of the Sorbonne. His name was Hugues Sureau, and that name had become another word, with those of his religion, for triumph. It was true that while he carried on his ministry at Orleans, his singular opinions, love of controversy, and fondness for novel theories, had so much displeased the heads of his church that it was thought advisable to remove him, and when he arrived at Rosiers he was looked upon as under a cloud; those who went to hear his doctrine did so almost with reluctance, fearing that ideas scarcely orthodox would be promulgated

by him. In a very short time, however, all became proselytes to his manner of teaching, and before long his fame spread far and wide, till Paris sent her hundreds to the little church where so great a preacher might be heard.

The Catholic clergy observed his popularity, and the hold he had taken on the minds of the people, with uneasiness, and learned with annoyance that several converts had been made from their own church by his persuasion. They had, therefore, resolved to discover the weak points of his character, and to draw him, if possible, over to their party.

At the time of the "Matines" he was still preaching with great force, and exhorting his congregation to be firm and resist to the last; but unable to contend with the panic which took possession of all, and being himself in the greatest danger, he was obliged to fly with the rest. Being taken, and having had some communication with several of the heads of the Catholic church at Paris, he began to see the utter uselessness of persevering in the reformed profession, and the probability of advancing the cause hereafter by making a semblance of conforming to the Romish faith.

He was artful and designing, and having little real devotion it was not very difficult to



his conscience to dissemble : he accordingly exhibited the desired signs of conversion, and greatly edified some of the Doctors with whom he had before contended, by confessing himself at length convinced by their superior knowledge.

Information was sent to King Charles that he was ready publicly to abjure his errors, and it was concluded that a proper audience on the occasion would be the captive Huguenot princes. Hugues Sureau was therefore brought to Paris, and introduced to the King, who was much satisfied with his demeanour, and held out hopes to him of preferment in the church of his adoption. The King of Navarre, and his sister the Princess Catherine, the Prince and Princess of Condé, and others, were summoned to attend to his discourse, and on the minds of many of them it made a great impression. The Prince of Condé, however, remained firm, and nothing could shake his resolution, nor would he consent to dissimulation, which was the policy recommended to Henry of Navarre by many of his friends.

After a great deal of discussion, and some private exhortations to the young King of Navarre, in which Sureau convinced him that it was for the ultimate good of all parties, that

he should appear to conform, Henry gave way, and made his public profession of the Catholic faith, how sincerely, was proved by his subsequent conduct. But his having done so was enough for the occasion, and a day was instantly fixed on which he should attend mass and receive absolution from the Cardinal de Bourbon.

After the ceremony had been performed, all the party adjourned to the cemetery of the Innocents, to visit the spot where a great miracle had been performed, and where the Parisians hurried in crowds to behold so signal a proof of Divine approbation. What the feelings of the new converts might be, it may be as well not to inquire; but all were expected to attend while a popular preacher of the day, Le Père Beauxamis, of the order of Carmelites, delivered a sermon, of which the passages which follow may give a general idea.

The holy father set out by exhorting his congregation to consider how by every occurrence the satisfaction and approval of Heaven had been made manifest.

\* "It appears to me," he went on to say, "that the grandeur and magnificence of this

\* See Etoile.

fact should not be allowed to pass unnoticed: and above all, we should remember with gratitude and devotion the virtuous and exemplary part taken in this business by the King, the Queen-mother, and their counsellors, and worthily magnify their names for the noble and generous manner in which they have discharged their duty.

“Look, my brethren, at the dexterity, the artifice, the power of dissembling, the prudence, the discretion used on this great occasion. Look at the elevation of mind in the conception, and the boldness and courage in execution. If we consider carefully all these things, we must confess that they are worthy of eternal glory; and who shall deny that these exalted personages are instruments deemed suitable by the Great Director, in forwarding His will—made evident in all the circumstances of the case. First, by the infatuation and blindness of these heretics, whom no warnings from their friends could cause to remove from the place destined to be the theatre of their punishment. Next, that the glorious enterprize being necessarily imparted to so many, should never have been divulged, although women were amongst those to whom it was entrusted! and that all the deliberations and discussions carried on for so

many months, should not have excited suspicion or uneasiness in the minds of these besotted Pagans !

“Again,—might it not naturally have been feared that his Majesty, from inadvertence, being, as he is, but young, might have allowed the intended plan to transpire? — as, indeed, some of his sayings to these deluded wretches gave them cause for reflection, and did excite momentary doubts, which, however, were soon allayed.

“No ; it is evident that Heaven, resolving to put an end to the wicked machinations of these traitorous rebels, prevented their ears from hearing, and their senses from comprehending the meaning which was hidden ; for it was decreed that our good King and his benevolent and patient mother, who had too long been victims to the torments inflicted on their minds by these diabolical conspirators, should be at once delivered from them, so that in spite of the worldly knowledge and great endowments of these wicked sinners, they were but as fools and children, understanding not the deceits and snares set round about them.

“We must see in this the peculiar grace of God, for they themselves urged their own fate in entreaties to be furnished with guards, and

delivering themselves, as it were, like sheep to the slaughter. I could cite a thousand instances; but that of the late Admiral is sufficient, who, when the King himself granted him permission to arm his followers, neglected to do so, and was weak and trusting enough never to demand a *written order*, authorizing the Captain of the guard, to permit the arms to be carried into his house; for it cannot be doubted that his Majesty, from excellent policy, would have given the writing, had it been asked for, the better to deceive: but this order not being obtained, of course the armour was arrested, as we have seen, and the Admiral's people left defenceless. This is a wonderful and startling fact, truly, my brethren.

“Another instance of the wisdom and craft of the King I must not omit. Observe how admirably was the stratagem arranged which granted to the benighted Admiral the conduct of the Flanders war; when his Majesty, feigning that he could not confide in his Catholic subjects, begged the Huguenot chief to furnish a muster-roll of all his friends, and collect them in and about Paris, thus getting the principals in his power at one swoop. We must, I repeat, magnify this deed with the greatest praise, for such another stratagem, how

pointed, subtle, and wise soever, never had its parallel in history ancient or modern !

“Now, my brethren, let us take into consideration another peculiarity : think of the felicity of the time and the hour chosen ; think of the wonder that in so brief a space all should have arrived at so happy an ending. We cannot without amazement reflect on this, and must come always to the same conclusion that the whole was a manifestation of the will of God ; that it was, in fact, *His* work, who full of pity and compassion visited them in this remarkable manner.

“Is there not a great and striking resemblance, my dear hearers, between our august and beloved Lady, the Queen-mother, and Queen Blanche of Castile, mother of Saint Louis, who, left a widow with her young son, saw the great lords of the land rise against her, and join themselves with the heretics of Toulouse, called Albigenses, who, exactly similar to these moderns, denied the efficacy of priests, monks, images, the mass, and other similar adjuncts of religion ? Those mutinous subjects called to their aid King Peter of Aragon, and great was the battling and danger which ensued ; but the victory was obtained by the servants of God, and they were given over to

slaughter, and the vengeance of the King and his mother was complete on the rebels, even as their crimes merited.

“Let me pause to recite the honourable deeds performed by the worthy Duke of Anjou, brother of the King, and Monsieur de Nevers, who have put their hands laudably to the good work. Were I to enumerate their acts, my discourse would be too long, and, peradventure, I might tire my hearers with the recital; therefore I pass to an outward and visible sign of the judgment and approbation of God,—one which, my dear brethren, is apparent to you all; one which is at this moment before your eyes.

“Look, my beloved, look and worship! See how the divine pleasure is shown at the execution of this glorious enterprise, thrice-happy and admirable as it is! Behold! to the perpetual confusion of the unbelieving heretics, and to our perpetual edification, this flowering tree, which began to shoot forth its blossoms and leaves in beautiful profusion at the very moment when the first of this *pernicious pestilence of Huguenots* fell before the avenging power of faith.

“Yes, this thorn dried up, dead, and condemned to be rooted up, produces branches, sends forth flowers, is covered with garlands in

the sight of assembled multitudes, to show the satisfaction and exultation of the heavenly host, and as a sign that the Divine wrath is appeased."

At the conclusion of this harangue the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds; they shouted, leaped, screamed with delight and devotion; and crowding round the miraculous tree, vowed that the deed so happily begun should not fall to the ground for want of performers in the drama.

As for King Charles himself, so excited was he by the praise he had received, and the applause of his subjects, that he hastened back to the Palace, and with fearful oaths and execrations called for his Captain of the guard, insisted on being armed from head to foot, and frantically protested that he would sally forth, and with his own hand exterminate the Huguenots wherever he could meet with them.

"Let the Prince de Condé be brought to me instantly," he thundered forth. "Let me hear him instantly abjure his cursed belief, or suffer that punishment which his obstinate crime deserves."

Some of his attendants, terrified at his impetuosity, hurried to execute his commands; others, more prudent, and aware that the Queen-



mother's policy at this moment was to conciliate rather than incense the Protestants still more, informed her of the fact; and her ready wit suggested a remedy, to which she never before had had recourse.

Elizabeth of Austria, the wife of this turbulent, weak, and cruel prince, was one of the softest, gentlest, and most virtuous of her sex, living in comparative obscurity at the court of her husband; and, spending most of her time in devotional exercises and charitable acts, she was seldom seen, and never consulted on any affair of moment.

Charles had the utmost veneration and respect for her, and stood in awe of her saintly character, for he felt that her piety and devotion were sincere. As she was not in the habit of offering advice, or interfering on any occasion, he seldom spoke to her on public affairs; and so totally ignorant was she of the dreadful measure which the policy of the Queen-mother had suggested, that she went to bed at her usual time on the fatal night; and hearing in the morning of what had occurred, she exclaimed, with tears, "Oh! does the King my husband know of this?"

When she found that he had commanded it her grief was excessive, and her prayers cease-

less that punishment might be averted from the authors of so deadly a crime.

She was found on her knees in her oratory by Catherine, who sought her on hearing of the furious state in which her son was, and she instantly addressed her with entreaties to go to Charles and endeavour to calm him by her presence, and prevent, if possible, the catastrophe which threatened Condé.

Elizabeth hesitated not to throw off the usual timidity of her character, and assume that of a determined intercessor for the unfortunate. She left her chamber instantly, and sought that of her husband. There a scene awaited her which required all her firmness.

Charles was pacing up and down the room in a state of uncontrollable fury. Before him, cold, pale, and sullen, stood the Prince of Condé, on whom he was heaping every epithet which passion could suggest. "Detested, lying traitor!" he cried wildly, "dare not to answer me! I have been too lenient. I was an idiot to save any of your sect, condemned by Heaven as you are! Hear me, and answer at once, for never more shall the option be given you. Choose mass, the Bastile, or death!"

The Prince looked undauntedly at the infuriated countenance of Charles, and replied —

"To the first I cannot consent. The choice of the other two I commit to your Majesty."

"It is enough!" cried the King. "Wretch! die then in your sin."

He darted towards Condé, and made a plunge at him with his dagger, which the Prince, starting aside, avoided; and in the place he had just occupied Charles beheld, with wonder and affright, the figure of his wife.

"Sire!" she exclaimed, "what do I see? What madness has taken possession of your brain? Have you not mercifully given command to stop the effusion of blood, and does your own hand recommence the slaughter?"

"Elizabeth!" cried the King, passing his hand over his brow, as if unconscious where he stood, "is it you? I thought it was our blessed Lady herself come to commend me for the services I had performed."

"Rather," said the young Queen mildly, "were such a miracle vouchsafed, it would have been to warn you to spare the erring and unfortunate. Dismiss the Prince, I entreat you, and calm this agitation which affects you so fearfully."

Charles waved his hand, and the Prince, no less astonished at the vision than himself, with-

drew hastily from the fury of the maniac who threatened his life.

With adroit tenderness the Queen soothed and appeased the anger of her husband, whose paroxysm was now passed, and looking on her with admiration, he said—

“Elizabeth, you are my guardian angel!—would that you were more with me, and that my mother would leave me in peace!”

“Your mother, dearest Charles,” said the amiable Princess, “has always your good in view in all she does; blame her not; but suffer not your passionate zeal for religion to overstep the bounds of mercy. The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit: he asks not blood, for he is a God of peace.”

“You say right,” returned Charles; “and I may flatter myself in possessing in a good and amiable wife a woman the wisest and most virtuous, not in France nor in Europe, but in the whole world!”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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